



**Universidade de
Aveiro
2006**

Departamento de Línguas e Culturas

**Marlene
Monteiro
Pires
de Paula**

**Hitchcock e a Arte do Assassínio
Filmes seleccionados 1945-60**

**Hitchcock and the Art of Murder
Selected films 1945-60**



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dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica do Prof. Doutor Anthony Barker, Professor Associado do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro

O júri

Presidente

Prof. Dr. Kenneth David Callahan
Professor Associado da Universidade de Aveiro

Vogais

Prof. Dr. Anthony David Barker (Orientador)
Professor Associado da Universidade de Aveiro

Prof^a. Dr.^a Francesca Clare Rayner
Professora Auxiliar do Instituto de Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade do Minho

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palavras-chave

Filme, arte, assassinio, moralidade, estética, narrativa, Hitchcock

resumo

O presente trabalho propõe-se examinar diferentes representações e interpretações do assassinio enquanto arte. Esta dissertação tem por objectivo analisar filmes seleccionados realizados por Alfred Hitchcock que se debruçam sobre a arte do assassinio, com particular ênfase na moralidade, estética e narrativa. O livro também inclui uma bibliografia e a filmografia de Alfred Hitchcock (de forma a facilitar a consulta de referências), assim como uma lista de outros filmes referidos no texto.

keywords

film, art, murder, morality, aesthetics, narrative, Hitchcock

abstract

This work deals with different representations and interpretations of murder, particularly murder as an art form. This Dissertation aims at analysing selected films directed by Alfred Hitchcock that deal with the art of murder, focusing on morality, aesthetics and narrative. The book also comprises a bibliography and Alfred Hitchcock's filmography (for ease of reference purposes for the reader), as well as a list of other mentioned films.

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Fig. 1 Cuts and approximate duration of each reel in *Rope*.

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Introduction

Alfred Hitchcock has always been part of my childhood memories. When I was a child I loved to watch him present his popular television series, always with a bit of refined irony and humour. When I was asked to choose a theme for my thesis, Hitchcock immediately came to my mind, but I also thought it could prove to be a large and difficult subject (it was, after all, little more than a memory from my childhood). The fact remains however that no other film subject has caught my attention as Hitchcock has, so I decided to do it. While I was reviewing many his critically acclaimed films in order to decide which ones I would work on, I discovered why I had always been so fascinated by Hitchcock: the humour, the strangeness, the irony, the suspense, the fear... it was all there.

My thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, denominated 'Hitchcock: his Life, Career and Position within Film Culture,' I will focus, as the title indicates, on Hitchcock's life, but especially on his career as a filmmaker, which was not linear but marked by a trajectory of popular successes and failures (some would find critical success some years later) and his reputation within film culture. After that, I will analyse my chosen films (*Rope*, 1948; *Strangers on a Train*, 1951, and *Psycho*, 1960) focusing on murder and how it is represented. I will do it through three main lines of argument: in respect of morality, aesthetics and of narrative. In the second chapter, 'Hitchcock: Doubtful Morality', the analysis will be based not only on the concepts of right and wrong, correct and incorrect behaviour, guilt and innocence, but mainly on the kinds of moral dilemma that every human being has to face everyday, and the impossibility of deciding clearly, due to the pressure of circumstance and one's own concealed desires. In addition, I will deal with the traditional concepts of hero and villain, who sometimes seem to be so alike that it becomes impossible to distinguish them. I will also discuss murder as a sin; shadows and chaos, representing the seductive evil that so often seems to enter the world of order, and guilt and punishment. Chapter three ('Hitchcock: Aestheticizing Murder') focuses on the aesthetics of murder, that is, the varied processes displayed by Hitchcock in order to stylize a murder and make it visually attractive. Thus, through the shooting process, the set design, the

dialogues and the humour, the music and the doubling of characters, Hitchcock manages to make the repellent attractive. The visual aspects as well as the concepts of attraction and repulsion, the pleasing and the unpleasing, will also be mentioned, along with other aspects inherent to these concepts. In the fourth chapter, 'Hitchcock's Film Narrative Technique and the Murder Story,' the analysis will focus on the murderers' philosophies and playacting; on storytelling through dialogue, which allows the audience to know more about the back story of each character, and also on editing and in the bold manipulation of time and suspense, of which Hitchcock is undoubtedly an acclaimed master.

Alfred Joseph Hitchcock was born on Sunday, August 13, 1899, the third child of William and Emma Hitchcock. He was born in Leytonstone, into a Catholic family of greengrocers. This religious affiliation marked his whole life and career, an influence that Hitchcock himself acknowledged: "I come from a Catholic family and I had a strict, religious upbringing (...) I don't think I can be labeled a Catholic artist, but it may be that one's early upbringing influences a man's life and guides his instinct (...) I am definitely not anti-religious; perhaps I'm sometimes neglectful" (Truffaut: 488). Besides being brought up in a Catholic family, Hitchcock had a Jesuit education, having been admitted at Saint Ignatius College, Stamford Hill, London, a school "already widely known for the traditional Jesuit insistence on order, discipline, and a rigorous curriculum" (Spoto: 23). Alfred Hitchcock was a lonely, solitary child, who preferred to observe, rather than to participate, who preferred his own books and games, and loved timetables. Hitchcock commented: "I would sit quietly in a corner, saying nothing. I looked and observed a great deal. I've always been that way and still am. I was anything but expansive. I was a loner – can't even remember having had a playmate. I played by myself, inventing my own games" (20). Hitchcock built his own world, and stories and fantasies, inside himself. This isolated him from the other children and developed his solitary imagination. One of his schoolmates, Robert Goold, remembers Hitchcock as "a lonely fat boy who smiled and looked at you as if he could see straight through you" (29) and "as a solidly built dumpling of a boy with a ruddy, smiling face and a mischievous capacity for getting into trouble" (29). Apparently, Hitchcock always liked to play practical jokes, which were sometimes not socially correct, "I guess

you could say Alfred Hitchcock had a sense of the macabre even at school” (Robert Goold, quoted by Spoto: 32). This ‘sense of the macabre’ would, later on, become the root of his films. Some of the themes and characteristics present in Hitchcock’s films probably had their origin in his education, specifically ‘the ambiguity of mothers’, ‘guilt’ and ‘innocence’, ‘fear’ and ‘suspense.’ Spoto argues that guilt is “the predominant theme of Hitchcock’s films” and he explains that

It derives not only from the complexities of his own inner life: guilt is also one of the great themes in all art, and especially in contemporary art and literature. When this theme is connected to some experience of a religious tradition, the situation and characters are informed with a rare human intensity. With Catholic artists (...) Hitchcock shared an intuition that one can, in the last analysis, be freed from corruption only *by* guilt – by standing condemned and accepting forgiveness and redemption freely or enduring punishment and hoping for a second chance (17).

In many of Hitchcock’s films the characters are imbued by doubtful thoughts and feelings related to guilt, which are natural in the human being and give the characters that ‘human intensity.’ Fear and suspense are also characteristic of all the films made by Hitchcock. He once commented on an episode of his childhood in which he felt fear and eventually found some comfort in food.

Fear? It has influenced my life and my career. I remember when I was five or six. It was a Sunday evening, the only time my parents did not have to work. They put me to bed and went to Hyde Park for a stroll (...) They were sure I would be asleep until their return. But I woke up, called out, and no one answered. Nothing but night all around me. Shaking, I got up, wandered around the empty, dark house and, finally arriving in the kitchen, found a piece of cold meat which I ate while drying my tears (Spoto: 18-19).

Apparently Hitchcock, the master of fear and suspense, confessed that sometimes he was frightened: “Asked if he was ever really frightened about anything, Hitchcock would reply simply: ‘Always!’- and the brevity of the reply and the insistence with which he changed the topic are clues to the large truth of it” (Spoto: 18). He even related his fears to his obsession with order, both in his life and work: “I’m full of fears and I do my best to avoid difficulties and any kind of complications (...) My passion for orderliness goes hand in hand with a strong revulsion toward complications” (Truffaut: 397). Some of his fears and terrors may have had origin in his childhood (including the incident at the police station): “I was

terrified of the police, of the Jesuit Fathers, of physical punishment, of a lot of things. This is the root of my work...But if you examine my films, I daresay you'll find very few where wrong has the ascendancy" (Spoto: 28).

Hitchcock found out that people liked to feel fear when they were safe, by reading Edgar Allan Poe's stories. Hitchcock established a comparison between his films and Edgar Allan Poe's novels, which he discovered when he was sixteen:

I still remember my feelings when I finished 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue.' I was afraid, but this fear made me discover something I've never forgotten since: fear, you see, is an emotion people like to feel when they know they're safe. When a person is sitting quietly at home reading a tale of terror, one still feels secure. Naturally you shiver, but since you're in familiar surroundings and you know it's only your imagination that responds to the reading, you then feel a great relief and happiness – like someone who has a cold drink after being very thirsty. And then you appreciate the gentle lamp and the comfortable armchair you're sitting in... (Spoto: 39).

Hitchcock further acknowledged that he was influenced by Poe's work, as well as by romanticism and surrealism: "I was influenced by all this, as you can tell by certain dream and fantasy sequences in some of my films..." (Spoto: 40). But above all it is suspense that commands Hitchcock's films and Poe's novels: "both Poe and I are prisoners of the suspense genre. If I made *Cinderella* into a movie, everyone would look for a corpse. And if Poe had written *Sleeping Beauty* they'd be looking for a murderer!" (40).

In fact Hitchcock had been fascinated by murder and crime since he was very young. He often spent his free days at the Old Bailey Court, watching murder trials and storing up material in notebooks; he often went to the Black Museum at Scotland Yard, a police chamber of horrors that contains relics of famous crimes and criminals ("They've got all the shoes of prostitutes from the gaslight era (...) Did you know that the color of every scarlet woman's shoes determined what her specialty was? If a man saw a prostitute walking along Waterloo Bridge at night he knew she did one thing in red heels, another thing in blue heels. I find that a fascinating bit of information"), and he read the *News of the World*, a Sunday paper that satisfied his interest in patterns of murder and sadomasochist behaviour (32-33).

I have always been fascinated by crime (...) It's a particularly English problem, I think. The British take a peculiar interest in the literature of crime.

It goes back to reading Conan Doyle. Every time you read about a particularly grisly trial at Old Bailey you also read that some famous actor or director or writer is present...There is even a club here that meets after every trial just so both attorneys for the defense and the prosecution can have lunch in a private dining room and discuss the case all over again. I have been to these meetings, and they are much more interesting than the actual trials. Of course it's not as exciting now because you can't hang anybody anymore (Spoto: 33).

The British reading public was interested in "the mystery aspect, the intellectual game of solving the crime" (Spoto: 34). There were at this time a series of crimes and murders that attracted the public's and Hitchcock's attention (Charles Peace, in 1876; Jack the Ripper, in 1888; Mary Eleanor Pearcey, a few years before Hitchcock was born; Dr. Hawley Harvey Crippen; George J. Smith, in 1915; John Reginald Halliday Christie, to mention some of the more famous criminals) (33 -34).

Hitchcock always had a 'peculiar' way of referring to murder, an ironic way. For instance, at a gala in New York City, in 1974, in which he was honoured by the Film Society of Lincoln Center, his speech touched on one of his favourite subjects:

As you have seen, murder seems to be the prominent theme. As I do not approve of the current wave of violence that we see on our screens, I have always felt that murder should be treated delicately. And, in addition to that, with the help of television, murder should be brought into the home where it rightly belongs. Some of our most exquisite murders have been domestic; performed with tenderness in simple, homey places like the kitchen table or the bathtub. Nothing is more revolting to my sense of decency than the underworld thug who is able to murder anyone – even people to whom he has not been properly introduced. After all, I'm sure you will agree that murder can be so much more charming and enjoyable, even for the victim, if the surroundings are pleasant and the people involved are ladies and gentleman like yourselves.

Finally, I think I can best describe the insidious effect of murder on one's character by reading a paragraph from Thomas De Quincey's delightful essay "Murder as One of the Fine Arts." He said: "If once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing, and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. Once begun on this downward path, you never know where you are to stop. Many a man dates his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps he thought little of at the time."

They tell me that murder is committed every minute, so I don't want to waste any more of your time. I know you want to get to work. Thank you (Spoto: 528-529).

And another speech, this time at the National Press Club: "Like many other institutions, murder is a victim of the twentieth Century. There are many causes for alarm but I'm particularly concerned with the decline of murder in the home. When I was young, respectable people committed murder in private, behind closed doors, and among friends" ('The Hitchcocks on Hitch', *Strangers on a Train* DVD).

Hitchcock also owned a library of criminal cases and, "like the crime novelist who speaks for him in *Suspicion*, he always thought of his murderers as his heroes". The difference between him and most British crime-writers was in "his obsession with the detail of suffering" (Spoto: 33), perhaps because he always feared suffering, even if it fascinated him.

Although Hitchcock achieved great popularity through his films, and also through his television series, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, he was not taken seriously by everybody. Samuel Taylor acknowledges that "Hitch was taken very seriously by the whole world – but not by Hollywood until it was too late." And the main reason for this seems to be the content of his films, as Taylor explains: "He was a great artist, but people in Hollywood never accepted him as such because of the content of his films (...) Hollywood believed the art of film lay in the content; therefore they refused to believe [that] a man who told what they considered frivolous stories could be a great artist" (Spoto: 552).

François Truffaut goes even further and comments:

In the fifties and sixties, Hitchcock was at the height of his creativity and popularity. (...) His fame had spread further throughout the world via the television series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* in the mid-fifties. But American and European critics made him pay for his commercial success by reviewing his work with condescension, and by belittling each new film (xiii).

Truffaut also acknowledges that many American journalists accused his films of lacking substance (xiii). On the other hand, Truffaut considers that

If Hitchcock, to my way of thinking, outranks the rest, it is because he is the most complete film-maker of all. He is not merely an expert at some specific aspect of cinema, but an all-round specialist, who excels at every image,

each shot, and every scene. He masterminds the construction of the screenplay as well as the photography, the cutting, and the sound track, has creative ideas on everything and can handle anything and is even, as we already know, expert at publicity!

Because he exercises such complete control over all the elements of his films and imprints his personal concepts at each step of the way, Hitchcock has a distinctive style of his own. He is undoubtedly one of the few film-makers on the horizon today whose screen signature can be identified as soon as the picture begins (Truffaut: 11).

These remarks were made, it is true, in the context of the campaign to establish directors as legitimate film artists or auteurs on an equal footing with great writers and painters. Nevertheless, it has been successful in achieving a paradigm shift of critical evaluation and nowadays most critics would indeed consider Hitchcock one of the greatest masters of cinema and agree that he is admired all over the world. Hitchcock started in silent films, then he had to work on sound films (although he always considered silent pictures as 'the purest form of cinema' [Truffaut: 73]), and after that on colour films, and he went through all these (and other) changes and innovations adapting himself and creating perhaps up to a dozen films that are considered by the public and by critics to be masterpieces.

Chapter I

Hitchcock: his Life, Career and Position within Film Culture

“[W]hatever happens in the course of your career, your talent is always there.”

Alfred Hitchcock in *Hitchcock by Truffaut, The definitive study*, p. 109.

“Dialogue should simply be a sound among other sounds, just something that comes out of the mouths of people whose eyes tell the story in visual terms.”

Alfred Hitchcock in *Hitchcock by Truffaut, The definitive study*, p. 332.

Alfred Hitchcock's place in film studies is unrivalled, as a director that knew like no other how to make the best advantage of the visual means and techniques of the time and how to tell stories visually. The image was his raw material and he knew how to use it in order to tell a story. Even so, his career has had many ups and downs through the years, partly because of the expectations that have been created around his films. Being probably one of the most influential, as well as one of the most discussed directors (his films are widely known through television and analysed), there is an enormous quantity of books, articles and essays on him and on his films. There are a great number of biographies of Alfred Hitchcock, namely *Hitchcock, The Making of a Reputation* by Robert E. Kapsis, focusing on his work but also on his personal life and on the influence his work exerted over some younger directors; *Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light* by Patrick McGilligan, divided up into periods of time, it covers Hitchcock's private and professional life, reporting interviews with people who worked or had any contact with Hitchcock, along with an exploration of the creative process in Hitchcock's films; *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* by Donald Spoto is, as the name itself indicates, a biography that focuses not only on Hitchcock's work but also on his personal demons, some feel rather unfairly. Other books, like *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* by Robin Wood and *Hitchcock* by Jean Douchet, analyse some of the key films that have marked Hitchcock's career. *Hitchcock* by

Paul Condon and Jim Sangster; *The Complete Films of Alfred Hitchcock* by Robert A. Harris and Michael S. Lasky and *Hitchcock at Work* by Bill Krohn conduct analyses of Hitchcock's films chronologically, alphabetically or at random. Howard Maxford, in his *The A-Z of Hitchcock: the Ultimate Reference Guide*, refers to every film, TV programme or person that came into contact with Hitchcock or his work. *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays*, edited by Richard Allen and S. Ishii Gonzalés, assembles several essays on Hitchcock, while Peter Conrad in *The Hitchcock Murders* offers an analysis of murder in Hitchcock's films, focusing on art, technique and religion. Some books are entirely devoted to the analysis of one film, like *Alfred Hitchcock and the making of Psycho* by Stephen Rebello. François Truffaut in his book *Hitchcock by Truffaut: The definitive study* and Peter Bogdanovich in *Who the Devil Made It?* (Chapter 8: Alfred Hitchcock, A Synonym for Suspense) report exhaustively their personal interviews with Alfred Hitchcock. All these books have served as a referential basis for this brief introduction to Alfred Hitchcock's career and films.

1. Hitchcock: Background and Evolution of a Filmmaker

Alfred Hitchcock was fascinated by the works of Chesterton and Flaubert, and particularly the works of Edgar Allan Poe, "I can't help comparing what I've tried to put in my films with what Edgar Allan Poe put in his novels [*sic*]: a completely unbelievable story told to the readers with such a spellbinding logic that you get the impression that the same thing could happen to you tomorrow." The identification between the spectator and the character of the film (hero or villain) is one of Hitchcock's astutest achievements, "that's the key thing if you want the reader or viewer to substitute himself for the hero – since people are, after all, interested only in themselves or in stories which could happen to them. I never broke this rule" (Spoto: 39) and, through the use of a wide range of film techniques, Hitchcock 'played' with the spectator's feelings, emotions and reactions: "you can't convey an emotion to the public unless you feel it yourself" (Truffaut: 118). Hitchcock started to feel these emotions quite early. At fifteen Alfred Hitchcock was already a devoted film-goer and later on he studied

photography, which probably gave him the solid technical grounding for his work: "I was very much aware of the superiority of the photography in American movies to that of the British films. (...) I had noticed, for instance, that the Americans always tried to separate the image from the background with backlights, whereas in the British films the image melted into the background. There was no separation, no relief" (Truffaut: 29).

Hitchcock began his working life as a technical estimator at the Henley Telegraph and Cable Company. At the same time he was taking some courses of art at the University of London and soon he was transferred to the advertising department of the company where he had the chance to draw, executing designs for advertisements of electric cables. "And this work was a first step toward cinema" since it helped him "to get into the field" (22), as he mentioned in his interviews with Truffaut. At the same time he contributed with a short story to Henley's 'social club magazine', in which Spoto already sees "the young Hitchcock's instinctive grasp of the mechanics of reader manipulation and the evocation of fear" (43). The film industry was starting to develop and opening up employment possibilities for suitable people. His cinematographic career began when he was hired to work at titles design at the Famous Players-Lasky studio. Later on, he became head of the titles department and went on to work for the editorial department of the studio. Meanwhile, through contact with several American writers, Hitchcock learnt how to write scripts, and he also started directing some extra scenes when needed. When the Famous Players-Lasky studio was taken over by British companies, Hitchcock approached them for work, becoming an assistant director, a job he maintained when the company formed by Michael Balcon became a tenant at the studios. In 1922 Hitchcock wrote the script for the film adaptation of the play *Woman to Woman*, directed by Graham Cutts. In his conversations with Truffaut he claims to have served as art director as well and helped on production. After that he performed several functions for several films like *The White Shadow* (1923), *The Passionate Adventure* (1924), *The Blackguard* (1925) and also *The Prude's Fall* (1925). Through Michael Balcon, Hitchcock had the chance to direct a picture for the first time, in Germany, *The Pleasure Garden*

(1925). After that, he directed *The Mountain Eagle* (1926), which he considered “a very bad movie” (Truffaut: 42).

The Lodger (1926) was “the first true ‘Hitchcock movie’” (Truffaut: 45), based on the play *Who is he?*, which in turn was based on Belloc Lowndes’s novel *The Lodger*. Hitchcock agreed that it could be said that *The Lodger* was his first picture since, as he stated to Truffaut, “It was the first time I exercised my style” and he further comments: “I took a pure narrative and, for the first time, presented ideas in purely visual terms” (46). His experience in silent film-making provided him with the skills and techniques that made many of his subsequent films masterworks, by giving him the opportunity to work with images *per se*, with photography, with the need to convey a feeling or an emotion wholly through visual means: “When we tell a story in cinema, we should resort to dialogue only when it’s impossible to do otherwise. I always try first to tell a story in the cinematic way, through a succession of shots and bits of film in between” (73). He learned to make the best use of the resources in film and to use ‘pictorial expression’ (29) and other visual devices, in a way that few other directors could successfully reproduce: “In those days we were very keen on the little visual touches, sometimes so subtle that they weren’t even noticed by the public” (60). To Truffaut’s remark that the public generally overlooks the elaborate details Hitchcock was so fond of, he answers “Well, we have to do those things; we fill the whole tapestry, and that’s why people often feel they have to see the picture several times to take in all of these details”; furthermore he considered each detail an important achievement because “Even if some of them appear to be a waste of effort, they strengthen a picture. That’s why, when these films are reissued several years later, they stand up so well; they’re never out of date” (305).

This was also the first film using the theme of the innocent man being accused, the theme that “provides the audience with a greater sense of danger” (Truffaut: 52). The audience was, in fact, one of Alfred Hitchcock’s biggest concerns: he loved to ‘play’ the audience, “like an organ” (Truffaut: 417). Through various techniques, such as shots showing the point of view of the characters or a significant detail, through cross-cutting, through dialogues (after sound was introduced), or even through the arc of the story itself, Hitchcock managed to

make the audience identify with one or more than one of the characters, therefore manipulating the audience, making them feel or think the way that most engaged them with the story: “the screen rectangle must be charged with emotion” (73). Moreover, he appreciated the power of cinema as a mass medium that touches everyone no matter what their nationality or mother tongue: “cinema is the greatest known mass medium there is in the world and the most powerful. If you’ve designed a picture correctly, in terms of its emotional impact, the Japanese audience should scream at the same time as the Indian audience. To a film-maker, this is always the challenge” (494). Even if some external factors can affect reception, film seems to possess an overwhelming power:

A novel may lose a lot of its interest in the translated version, and a play that’s beautifully acted out on opening night may become shapeless during the rest of the run, but a film travels all over the world. Assuming that it loses fifteen per cent of its impact when it’s subtitled and ten per cent when it’s well dubbed, the image remains intact, even when the projection is faulty. It’s *your* work that’s being shown – nothing can alter that – and you’re expressing yourself in the same terms everywhere (494).

Hitchcock expressed himself thoroughly and ceaselessly in the following years. However *The Lodger* was followed by a few assignments that did not inspire him or bring out his talent. In 1927 Hitchcock directed *Downhill, Easy Virtue*, and then *The Ring*: “after *The Lodger*, *The Ring* was the next Hitchcock picture. There were all kinds of innovations in it, and I remember that at the premiere an elaborate montage got a round of applause” (Truffaut: 60) and he also “began to experiment with little pictorial touches” (Hitchcock quoted by Bogdanovich: 492). *The Farmer’s Wife* (1928), also adapted from a play, was considered by Hitchcock “a routine job – merely a photograph of a stage play with lots of titles instead of dialog” (493), therefore, “largely a title film” and not “very cinematic”, but he further comments that “filming that play stimulated my wish to express myself in purely cinematic terms” (Truffaut: 65, 67). *Champagne* (1928) (“probably the lowest ebb in my output” [67]) and *Harmony Heaven* (1929) were followed by *The Manxman* (1929), “a very banal picture” (69), according to Hitchcock, and his last silent one.

Hitchcock’s first sound picture was *Blackmail* (1929), where he experimented with some sound innovations he was anxious to use, comparable to

visual ideas. This film was followed by *Elstree Calling* (1930), and *Juno and the Paycock* (1930), taken from the Sean O'Casey play, and about which Hitchcock comments "I photographed the play as imaginatively as possible, but from a creative viewpoint it was not a pleasant experience" (Truffaut: 84). *Murder* (1930), from a novel by Clemence Dane, was a film in which Hitchcock more intensively experimented with the techniques of sound and dialogues and it was also his first experience with a bilingual picture, working on the German and English versions at the same time. It was followed by *The Skin Game* (1931), "[p]hotographed theatre" (Hitchcock quoted by Bogdanovich: 497), based on a play by John Galsworthy; *Rich and Strange* (1932), and *Number Seventeen* (1932), "a terrible picture" (498) according to Hitchcock; after that he produced *Lord Camber's Ladies*, and ended his period with British International Pictures. In 1933 he made *Waltzes from Vienna*. In interviews with Bogdanovich and Truffaut, Hitchcock recognised that at that time his "reputation wasn't very good, but luckily I was unaware of this," it was a low point of his career but: "I don't ever remember saying to myself, 'You're finished; your career is at its lowest ebb.' And yet outwardly, to other people, I believe it was" (Truffaut: 107). Considering that time, Hitchcock offered the following general commentary:

Rich and Strange had been a disappointment, and *Number Seventeen* reflected a careless approach to my work. There was no careful analysis of what I was doing. Since those days I've learned to be very self-critical, to step back and take a second look. And never to embark on a project unless there's an inner feeling of comfort about it, a conviction that something good will come of it (107).

And finally something good did come out of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), based on a Bulldog Drummond story by 'Sapper', and Hitchcock's greatest British success till then that re-established his upward progress: "To all appearances, I seemed to have gone into a creative decline in 1933 when I made *Waltzes from Vienna*, which was very bad. And yet the talent must have been there all along since I had already conceived the project for *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the picture that re-established my creative prestige" (Truffaut: 109). Hitchcock directed a second version of this picture in 1956 which he considered superior to the first one: "Let's say that the first version is the work of a talented

amateur and the second was made by a professional" (120). The first version of this film was followed by *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1935), based on a John Buchan novel, in which Hitchcock particularly likes "[t]he rapidity of the switches, that's the great thing about it" (Bogdanovich: 501). Truffaut remarks that it was "approximately at this period that you began to take more liberties with the scenarios, that is, to attach less importance to the credibility of the plot, or at any rate, whenever necessary, to sacrifice plausibility in favor of pure emotion" (129-130). Hitchcock was in fact moved by pure emotion, by gathering up the audience and making them feel whatever he wanted, therefore, he did not mind so much about plausibility since "[t]o insist that a storyteller stick to the facts is just as ridiculous as to demand of a representative painter that he show objects accurately. What's the ultimate in representative painting? Color photography" (131, 134). Hitchcock was concerned about emotions, about making the audience truly 'feel' the film, comparing the director to God, since both create life:

There's quite a difference (...) between the creation of a film and the making of a documentary. In the documentary the basic material has been created by God, whereas in the fiction film the director is the god; he must create life. And in the process of that creation, there are lots of feelings, forms of expression, and viewpoints that have to be juxtaposed. We should have total freedom to do as we like, just so long as it's not dull. A critic who talks to me about plausibility is a dull fellow (Truffaut: 134).

In 1936 Hitchcock made *The Secret Agent*, which he considers unsuccessful because "In an adventure drama your central figure must have a purpose. That's vital for the progression of the film, and it's also a key factor in audience participation. The public must be rooting for the character; they should almost be helping him to achieve his goal" (Truffaut: 139), which does not occur in this picture according to Hitchcock. *Sabotage*, based on a novel by Joseph Conrad, was made in 1936 and Hitchcock considers it "a little messy" (153). There Hitchcock, in order to maintain the public's sympathy for the character played by Sylvia Sydney, manages through the camera movements, angles, frames and close-ups, to make the audience actually inhabit the scene: "Thanks to the camera, the public is now actually living the scene, and if that camera should suddenly become distant and objective, the tension that's been created would be

destroyed" (152). Also through different shots of the bomb carried by the boy, Hitchcock conveys a message of warning to the audience: "You can get anything you want through the proper use of cinematic techniques, which enable you to work out any image you need" (405). Furthermore, Hitchcock considers that "Our primary function is to create an emotion and our second job is to sustain that emotion" (152). In *Young and Innocent* (1937) Hitchcock used the rule "[f]rom the farthest to the nearest, from the smallest to the biggest" (156) especially in the shot at the hotel, where the camera is placed in the highest position, next to the ceiling, goes down right through the lobby, into the ballroom, past the dancers, the bandstand and the musicians, to a close-up of the drummer, who is the killer. The same kind of shot was used later on in *Notorious* (1946). Hitchcock comments that "There again we've substituted the language of the camera for dialogue" (159). *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), considered by Hitchcock "a very light film" (Bogdanovich: 505), though a "huge success" (473), also displays some interesting technical aspects, for instance there was only one coach on the train (the others were transparencies or miniatures) and Hitchcock photographed part of a scene through magnified glasses, a shot he later repeated in several films, such as *Strangers on a Train* (Miriam's glasses) or *Spellbound* (the giant hand). Hitchcock then directed *Jamaica Inn* (1939) based on a novel by Daphne du Maurier and "an absurd thing to undertake" (Truffaut: 167), even if it was a modest box-office hit. During his conversations with Truffaut, when confronted with the observation that he reached his creative peak in Hollywood, Hitchcock evaluated his work quite clearly:

the work in Britain served to develop my natural instinct, and later it enabled me to apply new, offbeat ideas. But the technical know-how, in my opinion, dates back to my work on *The Lodger*. As a matter of fact, the techniques and camera precepts that I learned then have continued to serve me ever since. For want of a better term, we might label the initial phase the period of the sensation of cinema, and the second phase, the period when the ideas were fertilized (170).

While shooting *The Lady Vanishes*, Hitchcock was contacted by David O. Selznick who asked him to go to Hollywood to direct a film based on the Titanic, but as it happened his first project was *Rebecca* (1940), a strikingly successful picture. Hitchcock does not consider it however "a Hitchcock picture" but "a

novelette” and comments: “The story is old-fashioned; there was a whole school of feminine literature at the period, and though I’m not against it, the fact is that the story is lacking in humour” (Truffaut: 176). After this film, Hitchcock made *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), a film “in line with my earlier films, the old theme of the innocent bystander who becomes involved in an intrigue” (187). Hitchcock commented on a particularly unusual single shot, without cuts: when the plane is diving down toward the ocean, through the camera in the cabin, behind the pilots, it is possible to see the ocean getting closer; then the plane dives in the sea and the water enters the cabin drowning the pilots. This effect was achieved through a transparency screen behind which there was a water tank, prepared to make the water burst and tear the screen. The superior skills of Hollywood’s craftsmen and technicians were very much to Hitchcock’s taste. Through these unusual shots and visual innovations Hitchcock’s reputation advanced, even if he still had to deal with the disparagement of being identified with a sub-genre in cinema.

Hitchcock explained to Truffaut that European and American standards are quite different, in respect of forms of writing, since while in Europe the thriller or adventure story is not “looked down upon,” on the contrary, it is “highly respected,” in America it is regarded as “second-rate literature” and “the approach to the mystery genre is entirely different.” For this reason, some leading actors refused to appear in these films and Hitchcock complains that “This attitude was so commonplace when I started to work in Hollywood that I always ended up with the next best,” which also happened in this picture (186). “In England I’d always had the collaboration of top stars and the finest writers, but in America things were quite different. I was turned down by many stars and by writers who looked down their noses at the genre I work in” (215), Hitchcock commented. Operating in a sub-genre not as highly respected as the traditional genres in America were, Hitchcock eventually achieved the respect and admiration of both the critics and the public, who over the years have surrendered to him and his art. Despite this, he never received an Oscar for Best Director. According to Bogdanovich “He was too successful, too popular” (473).

In 1941, Hitchcock made *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, his only American comedy, with his friend Carole Lombard, and *Suspicion*, based on the play *Before the Fact*,

by Francis Iles, and which Hitchcock considered the second “English picture” he made in Hollywood (Truffaut: 197). *Saboteur* (1942) was Hitchcock’s next film: “In several respects *Saboteur* belongs to *The Thirty-nine Steps*, the *Foreign Correspondent*, and the *North by Northwest* kind of film” (205); followed by *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Lifeboat*, both in 1943. *Lifeboat*, as its name indicates, was entirely filmed in a lifeboat, “the technical challenge was enormous. I never let that camera get outside the boat, and there was no music at all; it was very rigorous” (223). This idea of filming in a confined space would be later on reprised in *Rope* (1948). In 1944, Hitchcock undertook two small films (*Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*) for the British Ministry of Information that were “tributes to the work of the French Resistance” (228). The following film was *Spellbound*, in 1945, based on the novel *The House of Dr Edwardes*. Hitchcock was determined to go into the field of psychoanalysis and to “break with the traditional way of handling dream sequences through a blurred and hazy screen”, therefore he wanted Dali to work with him, “because of the architectural sharpness of his work” (233). *Notorious* (1946), basically based on a story that appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, ‘The Song of the Flame,’ is considered by Truffaut as being “the very quintessence of Hitchcock” (236) and a film in which he achieved “at once a maximum of stylization and a maximum of simplicity” (243). In 1947 Hitchcock directed *The Paradine Case*, also with some innovative shots, such as the shot in the courtroom, achieved in two takes, with a revolving effect and the effect of the actress being pulled off the screen. Finally, in 1948, Hitchcock directed and produced *Rope*, his first colour film and an enormous technical challenge, since it was done in a single continuous action, without cuts, except for those necessary to allow changing of the reels. These, as well as other aspects will be analysed in the following chapters. According to Hitchcock, around 1949 he was regarded as “a specialist in the suspense and thriller genre” (267). However, *Under Capricorn* (1949) does not fit in these categories. This film also had several long shots, which lasted from six to eight minutes, during which the camera would, for instance, move from one floor to the other. Hitchcock decided that this easy flow of the camera was probably a mistake, since it emphasizes the fact that this picture was not a thriller (Truffaut: 272). After that came *Stage Fright* (1950), also

a failure, and *Strangers on a Train* (1951), his great comeback film. Truffaut acknowledges that by 1950 Hitchcock's situation was not brilliant, and establishes a parallel between 1933, when after *Waltzes from Vienna*, his prestige was re-established by *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and his situation in 1950, when after the failures of *Under Capricorn* and *Stage Fright*, his prestige was re-established through *Strangers on a Train* (282), another of the three films I will be analysing in the following chapters. In *I Confess* (1952), according to Truffaut, there is a variation of the recurring theme of the interchangeable killing (293). Furthermore, Hitchcock considers the final result "rather heavy-handed" and "lacking in humour and subtlety" (295). *Dial M for Murder* (1954), based on a play (with its theatrical aspects emphasized by Hitchcock) and another 'run for cover' film, was filmed in thirty-six days and shot in 3-D, which gave an impression of relief especially in the low-angle shots. Another interesting visual effect was achieved through a series of close-ups on Grace Kelly's face instead of showing the entire courtroom, in order to maintain the unity of emotion. Hitchcock uses the visual medium and not the words or the dialogue when he shows the thickening of the plot through Grace Kelly's clothes: from very gay and bright colours at the beginning of the film to gradually more sombre clothes. Hitchcock comments: "I just did my job, using cinematic means to narrate a story taken from a stage play" (Truffaut: 317), but in most of the cases he did it in a way that no other director was able to do. *Rear Window* (1954), based on a Cornell Woolrich short story, was a technical challenge and, to Hitchcock, "[i]t was a possibility of doing a purely cinematic film" (319). According to Truffaut, Hitchcock does not give an overall view of the setting until the story reaches its dramatic climax, to which Hitchcock agrees: "The size of the image is used for dramatic purposes, and not merely to establish the background" (327), long shots are saved for the dramatic moments. Furthermore, Hitchcock explores to its maximum the elements related with a character and his or her situation (such as using cameras flashes in this picture to blind the killer). The use of visual means instead of dialogue to set the scene is also demonstrated in the beginning of this film: from James Stewart's face, the camera moves in order to show his immobilized leg, simultaneously the audience can see a broken camera, some magazines and some pictures of racing

cars. Therefore, in one shot and only through what is seen, the audience becomes aware of crucial information, such as the setting, the main character, his job, and how he probably hurt his leg.

In *To Catch a Thief* (1955), “a lightweight story” according to Hitchcock, he took particular care in getting the right blue, the colour of the night, through a green filter (Truffaut: 336). Then Hitchcock made an off-beat picture, *The Trouble with Harry* (1956), based on a novel by Jack Trevor Story and the American version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956). In 1957 Hitchcock directed *The Wrong Man*, largely based on a real life story Hitchcock had read in *Life* magazine, about a man who is arrested for a crime he did not commit, although all the evidence points to him, hence both Hitchcock’s favourite theme and a real case. Hitchcock took particular care with this film, for the sake of authenticity. Despite this, visual effects are liberally used, for instance when Henry Fonda is saying a prayer in front of a holy picture, there is a dissolve to the real villain and a superimposition of his face over Fonda’s. Another important visual technique is employed through the use of points of view, in this case, the wrongly accused man’s point of view, therefore a subjective point of view. In *Vertigo* (1958), taken from Boileau-Narcejac novel *D’Entre les Morts*, through visual effects Hitchcock gives Kim Novak’s Madeleine a ‘green’, fantastic, ghostlike quality; there is also a distortion effect, representing James Stewart’s vertigoes, when he looks down the stairway, which is achieved through “a track-out combined with a forward zoom”(372) and a miniature of the stairway. Hitchcock considered that “the story was of less importance to me than the over-all visual impact on the screen, once the picture is completed” (376). Truffaut argues that “just as *The Thirty-nine Steps* may be regarded as the compendium of your work in Britain, *North by Northwest* (1959) is the picture that epitomizes the whole of your work in America” (380). In this picture there were many visual effects like miniatures, replicas, points of view or subjective shots. In 1960, Hitchcock directed *Psycho*, a great commercial success “which was listed in second place at the box office for 1960, just behind *Ben Hur*.” A great success and one of his most memorable and recognizable films, it “reassured Hitchcock on his ability to captivate a mass audience with a

small film” (Truffaut: 501). *Psycho* is the third of the films I will discuss in the next three chapters.

After the end of his contract with David O. Selznick, Hitchcock became his own producer and owner of several of the negatives of his films, as well as of a great amount of shares in Universal/MCA, the company where *The Birds* (1963) and all the films that followed it were made. Hitchcock commented that in this film, based on a story by Daphne du Maurier, through the use of space, the frames and the movements and angles of the camera, he is able to “convey the impression of the fear that’s rising in her [Melanie]” (Truffaut: 404). In fact, Truffaut describes some of this scenes as “purely visual and immensely effective” (449), especially the scenes with the birds. Indeed the film employs so many process shots and special effects sequences that it could lay claim to being the progenitor of the modern FXs movie, as well as being the first ‘collective jeopardy’ horror movie. But its high cost and long shooting schedule made it relatively unprofitable. After *The Birds* came *Marnie* (1964), a box-office failure, also dealing in psychoanalysis, and after that some other film projects that were apparently delayed or dropped. In the mid-sixties, films made in Hollywood were going through a crisis due to competition from television, the changing censorship climate and declining audience numbers. In 1966 Hitchcock directed *Torn Curtain* about which he says that the photography “represented a drastic change” for him. He shot “the whole film through a gray gauze” and “almost attained the ideal,” that is “shooting with natural lights” (Truffaut: 482). *Topaz* (1969) was a spy novel that Universal persuaded Hitchcock to adapt but which ended up as a failure, with “poor artistic and box-office results” (522). He achieved success again with *Frenzy* (1972), based on the novel *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square*, by Arthur La Bern, a film “impregnated with charm” (522). Eventually Hitchcock directed *Family Plot*, in 1976, based on the novel *The Rainbird Pattern* by Victor Canning, showing a criss-crossing of stories and lives, but it was also unsuccessful. Feeling bad and trapped in his own success and others’ expectations, Hitchcock wrote to Truffaut: “you are a free person to make whatever you want. I, on the other hand, can only make what is expected of me;

that is, a thriller, or a suspense story, and that I find hard to do" (528). Hitchcock started to work on *The Short Night* but he never lived to film it.

Always with a project in his head, Hitchcock, one of the best known directors in cinema history, had a rather irregular career. This was inevitable for a man who did most of his work through the heyday of the Studio Era, and who did not achieve near-autonomy until the third decade of his productive career. His later work also shows evidence of decline because the nature of cinema and cinema audiences had moved on since the 1950s and the elderly ex-patriot director could not accompany all the social changes that America went through from 1960 to 1976. Ironically, for a director with little public respect for actors, he never adapted to the retirement of his star performers from the 30s, 40s and 50s.

Some of his films were immediately elevated to masterpieces, others, immediately considered flops. However, many of those films that were considered flops (most notably *Vertigo*) have been reappraised some time later and discovered to have extraordinary qualities, sometimes by the very same critics that had crucified them on their release. The appreciation of Hitchcock has also greatly benefited from a decline in snobbery about film genres and the academic study of technical aspects of film art, particularly by the new generation for whom he found it so hard to make films when still active. For this reason, Hitchcock has had an enormous influence on many film-makers working today.

Chapter II

Hitchcock: Doubtful Morality

“[V]illains are not all black and heroes are not all white; there are grays everywhere.”

Alfred Hitchcock in *Hitchcock by Truffaut, The definitive study*, p. 219.

The concept of Morality is easy to define and explain. Its operations in life however are immensely complex and difficult to disentangle. Morality, in art as well as in life, is not only about right and wrong, or law and crime; it is also about the everyday dilemmas that each human being has to face and about the impossibility of seeing clearly what should be done, under pressure from external circumstance on the one hand and one's own desires and drives on the other.

Furthermore, there is always a conflict between one's private morality and conventional morality imposed by society and the social order. Human beings have created laws and a judicial system that regulate social behaviour and judges and punishes the acts of those who do not abide by the law. Since the beginnings of regulated society, there has been a public system that allows people to judge or to be judged in the wider public interest, or more specifically in the defence of life, rights and property. The Christian religion and the Bible, for example offer countless examples of judgements and also misjudgements: from Adam and Eve, who were judged and condemned to expulsion from Paradise and to mortality by God; to Jesus, who was judged and condemned by the Pharisees and the Romans; and even to the Catholic system of repentance, the confession to a priest, who sits in judgement and gives penance so that the sinner can be absolved and live as a free man or woman again. The Bible also offers examples of the codification of morality in the Old Testament Ten Commandments and more loosely in the teaching of Christ.

Nevertheless, such is human affect that people can and do sympathize with malefactors and often find immoral, arguably evil, behaviour attractive, while virtue is found to be boring and uninteresting. It is the case that human beings in general enjoy observing or reading about macabre or violent events. We are emotionally

attracted to shows of violence and chaos, while abhorring it in our own lives. This finds expression in the popular taste for suspense or crime films. They (the good ones) can be thrilling and extremely diverting.

Most people, most of the time, try to act according to what is socially and conventionally acceptable. However, even those who do things that are socially or morally questionable in terms of these social codes have their own personal rules, their norms, their private moral sense. The characters of the three films that I have chosen have their own compelling reasons for doing whatever they do. Out of love, ambition, insanity, protection of one's territory and life, oppression, betrayal, or simply putting a theory into practice, they oppress, lie, steal from and kill other people. Some of them feel they have no choice but to do that, others feel guilt and make an attempt at redemption; some feel that they are the ones who are innocent and that the whole world is against them, others feel that whatever they did was justified and the right thing to do, they are so convinced of their own superiority that they cannot be judged and condemned by those who are their inferiors. Others seem to stand outside society because by its norms they would be considered insane (not that they always appear to be so). The defining of sane behaviour is another social codification which is open to question in art and life.

Our lives are made up of strange coincidences, accidents and unexpected events; unpredictability and contingency are ever-present and that is what makes life so thrilling and frightening at the same time. However, according to the law and to most moral teaching one is held responsible for one's own actions, whether they are premeditated or not, and so we must weigh and be ready to accept the consequences of our decisions and actions .

1. Hero and Villain: Which is Which?

Films, as representations of life, sometimes offer moral dilemmas which are as difficult to resolve as those of our lives. Like all socially engaged art, they deal in moral complication. In these three films the boundaries that separate the hero (or supposed hero) from the villain are rather blurred both by events and by Hitchcock's stylised representation of them.

In large part based upon the well-publicised Leopold and Loeb murder case¹, *Rope* was adapted, first as a stage play by Patrick Hamilton, then as a film by Alfred Hitchcock. In this black comedy of intrigue, there seems to be no hero since the man who seems closer to that role has some guilt in the murder that is committed, because his theories were the inspiration for the crime. Therefore, in moral terms, he shares some responsibility for the murder. This complicates the usual function of the star as a film's moral compass. Through his role as educator Rupert Cadell disseminated the ideas and theories that were the basis of the murder. Furthermore, unconsciously, the two murderers, as his 'self-assumed' sons, wanted their mentor's approval and applause. The faithful disciples have only put into practice what their mentor has proclaimed. The long term effects of theory and ideology through the educator's role are a good example of attenuated moral responsibility and therefore moral complication. The murderers are two wealthy young men who have some of the characteristics of the dandy, of, say, Dorian Gray, who clearly separate aesthetic from moral considerations. Characterized through the opulent set design, their costumes and mainly their brittle dialogue, Brandon and Philip seem to have only one thing in mind: to prove that they are superior human beings, the *Übermenschen* proclaimed by Nietzsche.

One of the guests to the party they hold for David Kentley's friends and family is Professor Rupert Cadell, a former schoolmaster of theirs, who introduced them to Nietzsche, harshly characterised by Spoto as a "theorist of murder" (408) and who actually "taught them the philosophical concept for which they rationalize the killing" (Harris; Lasky: 143). Philip is worried about this because he thinks that Rupert might be able to discover what they have done: they have strangled another of his former students with a rope and placed his body in the chest or large trunk in the living room. Before the party starts, Mrs. Wilson, the housekeeper arrives. The audience, along with Philip and Brandon, sees the rope sticking out of the chest and unconsciously hope that Mrs. Wilson does not see it. Calmly, Brandon takes up the murder weapon and puts it in a kitchen drawer. The

¹ Nathan Leopold Jr. and Richard Loeb were two wealthy University of Chicago students who in 1924 murdered Bobby Franks, apparently motivated by Nietzsche's philosophy and the belief that they could commit the perfect crime without being caught. They were arrested and sentenced to life plus 99 years. These events would also feature in other films, such as *Compulsion* (1959), directed by Richard Fleischer, or *Swoon* (1992), directed by Tom Kalin.

identification with the villains starts here, since although they are murderers, they are good-looking, wealthy and intelligent murderers, and Hitchcock understands that sympathies often follow aesthetic appearances.

The guests arrive and we witness Brandon's macabre sense of humour and enjoyment of the scene: besides throwing this party, he has invited Kenneth Lawrence and his ex-girlfriend Janet Walker, who is now going out with David Kentley, the victim; Mr. Kentley, David's father, who is accompanied by his sister, Mrs. Atwater, and finally, Rupert Cadell. In the presence of their former housemaster and mentor, whom the boys acknowledge has their superiority of mind, even Brandon loses his nerve and begins to stutter. The guests are surprised that David has not arrived yet and try to remember the last time they saw him. David's absence provokes increasing concern among the guests. As the film goes on, the guests make dramatically ironic comments, such as "These hands will bring you great fame!", that looked at from the perspective of those who know about the murder, the murderers and the audience, provide a chilling effect. While food is being served, Brandon reveals the reason for Philip's aversion to eating chicken: he once had a chicken-strangling job. From this point, the conversation moves from poultry to the topic of murdering people. Rupert Cadell seems to be an apologist of murder, claiming that it would solve numerous problems, such as poverty and unemployment, among others. "His philosophy is that concepts of good and evil were created for average people – principally because they need a moral code to live by. Superior, more intellectually advanced citizens need not feel that such codes apply to them, because they don't need them" (Condon; Sangster: 150). While other people are shocked, Brandon supports enthusiastically his mentor's ideas. Mr. Kentley (played by Cedric Hardwicke) is the spokesman for conventional, less 'advanced' morality and the conscience of the film: "When Brandon sneeringly decries 'inferior beings whose lives are unimportant anyway' – a line that linked Nietzsche with Hitler – the senior Kentley angrily rebukes his 'contempt for humanity'" (Mc Gilligan: 408-409). Furthermore,

We listen to the clever talk of Rupert and his ex-pupil Brandon (...) about the right of the "superior being" to place himself above accepted morality, even to kill. It is all light-hearted, on Rupert's side at least, his manner relaxed and engaging; we respond to his charm and to the outrageousness – the freedom and irresponsibility – of his joking. But

underlying this amused response we are never allowed to forget what this philosophy, adopted as a code of life, has led to (Wood: 79).

Meanwhile, Mrs. Wilson, who has cleared away the food from the top of the chest, prepares to put some books into it, but she is interrupted by Brandon who tells her to do it the next day. She also “prods along the suspense by wondering aloud why Brandon would spontaneously decide to bring the food into the parlor and set the table on large trunk ringed with candles, as if it were a ‘ceremonial altar’” (McGilligan: 409-410). As time goes by, Rupert starts to form some suspicions. His curiosity is “aroused by the absence of David from the party, the unexplained nervousness of Philip, Brandon’s ramblings about intellectual superiors being above the law, and the occasional clue” (David’s hat) (Maxford: 222). When Rupert becomes suspicious, Brandon defies him by giving him some clues about what they have done. When he finds out the truth Rupert is horrified to see what his theories have led to. Brandon explains that they took his theories and put them into practice: “there is a marked discrepancy between what he teaches and how he lives; now Brandon has lived what Rupert has taught” (Wood: 356). Rupert conceives, Brandon executes, which is rather reminiscent of recent history in 1948, with the upper echelons of the Nazi Party conceiving and the Gestapo and Wehrmacht executing.

Strangers on a Train, based on Patricia Highsmith’s novel, does not have such a shocking beginning. It begins with alternate shots of two pairs of shoes that enter a railway station. Truffaut comments that “One of the best things in *Strangers on a Train* is the exposition, with the follow shots on feet going one way and then the other. There are also the crisscrossing rails. There’s a sort of symbolic effect in the way they meet and separate” (284-285). The criss-cross on the shoes, as well as the crisscross on the train railways, symbolizes the criss-cross in the characters’ lives. The shoes seem to reflect their owners’ personality and type of life: Guy is a nice guy, who is on the right path right, while Bruno is a wild man, with no aim in life and many grievances. Harris and Lasky acknowledge that “Guy’s shoes are a conservative monochrome and Bruno’s are a gaudy brown and white. [...] Before we know the characters, though, we have learned their style of dress and their manner of gait. It has been clearly established that we have two

totally opposite personalities but that a similar link will be found" (156). Wood further acknowledges that "The two are characterized by means of their shoes: first, showy, vulgar, brown-and-white brogues; second, plain unadorned walking shoes. A parallel is at once established in visual terms: or, more precisely, a parallel is imposed by the editing on what would otherwise be pure contrast. Each shot of the first pair of feet is promptly balanced by a similar shot of the second" (86). More than a parallel, there is a notion that Guy and Bruno are the two faces of the same coin, they are each other's doubles: Bruno seems to represent the bad side, chaos, and Guy seems to represent the good side, the order. However, this is not entirely true and as the film goes on we can see Guy behaving improperly, as well as Bruno acting well, even if it is according to his own system of rules and morality. While Condon and Sangster say that "*Strangers on a Train* is a play of doubles and opposites" (173), Spoto acknowledges that "the form of the film is its meaning: doubles and pairs, accumulated and intercut in an almost endless series, mediate the theme" (327). Spoto also refers to the literary traditions that were familiar to Hitchcock and that may have had some influence in the theme of the double, such as E.T.A. Hoffman's tale, *The Doubles*, from which he took the device of the doppelgänger; or Heinrich Heine's *Ratcliff*, from which he knew "the dramatic value of describing two persons drawn together by fate, by love, and by murderous impulses" (329). Furthermore, "In the Romantic and Victorian precedents, the double always reflected strong inner conflict, a conflict between the fear of involvement with life and the concomitant fear of noninvolvement, stagnation, and death, a conflict between the reach toward wholeness and the danger of disintegration" (330). Bruno and Guy's fate, the fate of two strangers who meet accidentally in a train, seems to be linked for good and for evil. The two characters reflect two different ways of looking at life and death, and both have to live and deal with it. Truffaut comments that "This picture, just like *Shadow of a Doubt*, is systematically built around the figure 'two'." There both characters, one male and one female, are called 'Charlie.' Highsmith's source characters are more clearly discriminated than in the film; Bruno is an embittered aging alcoholic there. But "[w]hether it's Guy or Bruno, it's obviously a single personality split in two" (293). Spoto further adds:

There are, at the outset, two pairs of feet and two sets of train rails that cross twice. Walker and Granger meet when their crossed feet accidentally touch under a table. Walker orders a pair of double drinks. Later the two men are related by a crosscutting of words and gestures: one asks the time and the other, miles away, looks at his wristwatch; one says in anger, "I could strangle her!" and the other, far distant, makes a choking gesture; and so forth.

There are two respectable and influential fathers, two women with eyeglasses, and two women at a party who delight in thinking up ways of committing the perfect crime. There are two sets of two detectives in two cities, two little boys at the two trips to the fairground, two old men at the carousel, two boyfriends accompanying the woman about to be murdered, and two Hitchcocks in the film. The director, who at first had wanted to make his cameo in the Mellon Library or as a passenger on the train, finally decided to appear with the double of his own large form – carrying a double bass fiddle (327-328).

Krohn points out that "*Strangers on a Train* is a very self-conscious piece of film-making." And he exemplifies: "Take Bruno's seemingly innocent remark after ordering 'doubles' for himself and Guy to drink: 'That's the only kind of doubles I play.' The line (...) puns on a drinking term and a form of tennis played between pairs of opponents, but it also evokes at the outset the theme of 'the double' which Bruno embodies" (119). Spoto still adds that "The series of doubles (...) finally serves to associate the world of light, order, and vitality with the world of darkness, chaos, lunacy, and death" (328). From Guy and Bruno's meeting on the train forward, the two worlds are going to interpenetrate and collide. Truffaut points out that "That accidental collision of the two men's feet is the point of departure for their whole relationship, and the concept is sustained by deliberately refraining from showing their faces up to that point. In the same light the separating rails suggest the idea of divergent courses – two different ways of life" (285). The fact that it is Guy and not Bruno who provokes the meeting is quite significant; it is a kind of fate that rules human beings' lives. Wood points out that "Hitchcock makes

it clear that Bruno has not engineered the meeting, despite the fact that he knows all about Guy (...) and has the plan for exchanging murders ready to hand: it is rather as if he is waiting for a chance meeting he knew would come". And he concludes "This gives us, from the outset, the sense of some not quite natural, not quite explicable link between the two men" (86). Bruno invites Guy for dinner and he quickly establishes a link between them, due to the fact that he knows and admires Guy ("I certainly admire people who do things. People who do things are important. Now me, I don't seem to do anything"), a famous tennis player, who is trying to divorce his first wife, Miriam, in order to marry Ann Morton, the daughter of an influential senator. Guy himself wants to enter the world of politics, and it has been suggested by some authors that this marriage was the shortest way to achieve his goals (he has been described as "an opportunistic playboy" [Truffaut: 290]). Behind the idea of love and romance, that his mercenary wife is keeping two lovers apart, there seems to be a more materialistic idea. In fact, this is never openly declared in the film but if we read between the lines it could be so, corroborated by the kind of relationship that seems to exist between Ann and Guy, a distant and untrusting one. Wood comments about Bruno and Guy's relationship: "He understands Guy's darker motives better than Guy does himself: 'Marrying the boss's daughter – the short cut to a career': nothing later in the film, and especially not the uneasy, formal relationship between the lovers, contradicts this assessment" (88). Wood further adds that "despite the critical attitude adopted toward the lovers' relationship, we are made aware of its importance for Guy. Ann is more than a way to a career, she represents in herself something of the ordered world he aspires to" (91-92). In fact, "the political world is to Guy Haines, a world of order which offers a legitimate escape from a disordered past" (Wood: 82).

On the other hand, Bruno seems to be a lonely man, indulged by his mother and oppressed by his father, whom he hates. "Both men, like so many of Hitchcock's protagonists, are insecure and uncertain of their identity" (Wood: 87) and also about what they want their future to be like; both are depending on someone else's decisions in order to be happy. "Guy is suspended between tennis and politics, between his tramp wife and his senator's daughter, and Bruno is seeking desperately to establish an identity through violent, outré actions and

flamboyance (shoes, lobster patterned tie, name proclaimed to the world on his tiepin)" (Wood: 87). Some critics, such as Krohn and McGilligan, believe there are clear homosexual references in the film, implying that Bruno and Guy's sexual tendencies can be seen as two aspects of a single personality (homosexual/heterosexual).

Bruno is a very charming villain, who captivates the spectator in a way that Guy never manages to do ("[t]he more successful the villain, the more successful the picture" [Hitchcock quoted by Truffaut: 279]), thereby questioning the moral standards I mentioned before. Robert Walker delivers "a mesmerizing performance, overpowering Granger's. His Bruno is on par with the best of the Hitchcock villains for pure creepiness" (McGilligan: 451). Wood further adds that "Bruno forms a link in a chain of fascinating, insidiously attractive Hitchcock villains who constantly threaten to 'take over' the films in which they appear, not only as the center of interest but even, for all their monstrous actions, as the center of sympathy" (347-348) (Norman Bates is also among them). Even Hitchcock seems to have been captivated by this seductive man (Bruno); he seems to show no particular interest in the other characters: "Hitchcock clearly has no interest whatever in the characters played by Farley Granger and Ruth Roman, and this lack is inevitably communicated to the audience; their relationship has no emotional weight, their aspirations no moral value". Bruno is the true center of the film: "Everything gravitates toward Bruno as the film's magnetic center of attraction: he becomes not only its most complex and detailed character but also its most vulnerable, in his struggle for control and the escalation of his failure to maintain it" (Wood: 348).

Bruno is supposed to be the bad guy in the story, the man who makes children's balloons burst with his cigarette, but he is also the person who helps a blind man across the street. This can be regarded either as a way of expiating his guilt, a sort of redemption from his sins, or simply as the playfully roguish side of a usually bad guy. Significantly the boat on which Bruno follows Miriam is named Pluto, a detail that, according to Wood, reflects Catholic Hitchcock's fascination with Hell and damnation. "It is to these 'damned' characters (ambiguously lost souls or devils) that Hitchcock's strongest interest gravitates, giving us some of the

most vividly realized performances in his films; one looks in vain for any compensating intimation of Heaven” (221). Furthermore he manages to make our interest gravitate towards them as well.

When Guy goes into the Anthony’s mansion in order to warn Mr. Anthony against his son, Bruno feels betrayed and warns Guy that he is going to get even, “henceforward, Bruno is openly *against* Guy, no longer wanting anything but revenge.” Even after Bruno’s constant and provocative blackmailing of Guy, the audience cannot help wishing that he succeeds. In Bruno’s system of values, it is Guy who has done wrong: he enticed him, Bruno, to commit a crime that was not his to commit and now he refuses to accomplish his part of the agreement. “The conflict has changed levels, and the struggle for self-preservation is the price Guy must pay for his involvement; an involvement partly expiated by the decision taken outside Mr. Anthony’s bedroom” (Wood: 96).

Some critics consider this decision a cheap simplification, which “takes the form of trying to pass off Guy as a conventional hero” (Wood: 219). In Patricia Highsmith’s novel Guy does murder Bruno’s father: “it obviously conflicts with certain major requirements of the classical Hollywood film: no ‘hero’, no construction of the heterosexual couple, no happy end” (234). This happens according to Wood because of the effect that a “so morally dubious a ‘hero’” could have “on box office response” (96).

In *Psycho*, the audience also feels a ‘guilty’ identification with the villain. After Marion’s death Norman Bates, the murderer, becomes the audience’s centre of interest and attention. In fact, Norman is both a murderer who eventually kills Marion, and also a victim, who is possessed by his mother’s personality. Norman is also a watcher whose hobby is stuffing birds, but his identification with the birds goes even further: “Norman Bates, sitting in his room beneath stuffed birds of prey, becomes, simultaneously, the bird (from his resemblance to it) and its victim (from his position under it)” (Wood: 72). Other avian imagery includes according to Spoto “the crucial shot of Perkins knocking over a sketch of a bird when (in his ‘son personality’) he discovers the body of Janet Leigh – the last ‘stuffed bird’ is, aptly, a woman named Crane, who came from Phoenix (a city named for the mythic bird that returns from the dead)”. Furthermore, “when Perkins suggested

candy, Hitchcock insisted it be candy corn, a confection that resembles the kernels pecked by chickens" (425-426), and when Marion was driving her car in a sort of trance, she resembled a bird. Throughout their conversation they both reveal more about themselves than they would like. Wood comments that

The confrontation of Marion and Norman Bates (...) is in some ways the core of the film: the parallel made between them provides the continuity that underlies the brutal disruption when Marion is murdered. It is part of the essence of the film to make us feel the continuity between the normal and the abnormal: between the compulsive behavior of Marion and the psychotic behavior of Norman Bates (145).

At this moment it is rather difficult to decide who is who. Aggressor and victim seem indistinguishable. The childlike man seems even more hopeless, harmful and victimized than Marion. This point about the line of continuity between the normal and the abnormal is absolutely central to Hitchcock's work and to the importance of the crime thriller as a genre. It suggests that both morality and normality are a spectrum with subtle gradations, not a Manichean set of oppositions.

Marion realises he is an unhappy person, apparently dominated by his mother, with whom he seems to have a love/hate relationship. By suggesting that maybe it would be better to put his mother in a 'place,' Marion arouses Norman's anger: "But she's harmless! She's as harmless as one of those stuffed birds (...) It's not as if she were a maniac - a raving thing. She just goes a little mad sometimes." They talk about traps and wrong ways, and through their conversation Marion concludes that she has taken a wrong direction; ironically this conclusion has a far more literal meaning than it seems at first sight.

Marion is brought face to face with the logical extension of her present condition. Norman tells her, "We're all in our private trap. We scratch and claw, but only at the air, only at each other, and for all of it we never budge an inch": he is defining the psychotic state, the condition of permanent anguish whence development becomes impossible, a psychological hell. The parallel between the two is clinched when Norman says to her, "We all go a little mad sometimes. Haven't you?" (Wood: 145).

Marion seems to have seen in Norman Bates what she does not want to become, and she seems to have regained her moral sense, so she decides to go back to Phoenix and return the money, she decides to take the right way again:

It is her perception of Norman's condition that gives Marion her chance of salvation, which she takes. In answer to his question, she says, "Sometimes just one time can be enough. Thank you." She decides to return the money the next morning. The decision this time is clearly made: she has regained her freedom of will, her power of rationality. The scene prepares us for the transference of our interest from Marion to Norman. (145-146).

The uniquely Hitchcockian touch of course is that pun on 'going a little mad'; Marion's 'going a little mad' should not belong to the same universe as Norman's yet Hitchcock implies that it does.

Strangely enough, having lost the centre of the film after Marion's murder, the spectator finds another centre right away in Norman Bates. "Needing a new center, we attach ourselves to Norman Bates, the only other character (at this point) available. We have been carefully prepared for this shift of sympathies" (Wood: 146). Although we know that he is implicated in the crime, we cannot help feeling identified with him. As in *Rope* and in *Strangers on a Train*, our moral values and our emotional sympathies are not in synchronicity. Wood points out that

Norman is an intensely sympathetic character, sensitive, vulnerable, trapped by his devotion to his mother – a devotion, a self-sacrifice, which our society tends to regard as highly laudable. That he is very unbalanced merely serves to evoke our protective instincts: he is also so helpless (146).

Soon, another event disrupts Norman's life. A private detective hired by Marion's boss to recover the money comes to the Motel. By this time the spectator has already forgotten about the money; it has become a mere detail: "the fate of the money, after the shower murder, becomes an entirely trivial matter, and Hitchcock by insisting on it evokes in us a strong revulsion" (Wood: 143). After Arbogast disappears like Marion (in fact murdered too), Sam and Lila decide to register in the Motel in order to find out what is going on. While Sam detains Norman, Lila goes into the mansion. Sam and Norman have a conversation and, meanwhile, the spectator realizes that they have many physical resemblances, "As they face each other (...) we have the uncanny feeling that we are looking at two sides of the same coin" (147): it is almost as if one is the mirror of the other, Marion's lover and Marion's killer. Once more we are unable to make a clear

distinction between people's conduct, since our moral judgments seem clouded by our emotional sympathies and by the complications of sexuality. "[T]hey are interchangeable: each seems the reflection of the other (though a reflection in a distorting mirror), the one healthy, balanced, the other gnawed and rotted within by poisoned sex" (147). In the mansion, Lila visits Mrs. Bates and Norman's rooms, the first characterized by the mirrors, symbolic expressions of a split personality, and the second characterized by toys and objects too childish for a grown up man. Furthermore, "Lila's exploration of the house is an exploration of Norman's psychotic personality. The whole sequence, with its discoveries in bedroom, attic, and cellar, has clear Freudian overtones" (147). *Psycho* is, according to Spoto,

a film in which mirrors are endlessly accumulated: at the hotel; at the office, where Janet Leigh regards herself in a hand mirror; at her home; in her car; in a used-car-lot washroom; at the motel counter and in the motel rooms; and, most tellingly, in the room of the killer's "mother," where the meaning of the double mirror becomes clear (422).

A symbol of a fractured personality, "[t]he mirror is not only, as in gothicism, a prop suitable for the representation of the split personality – it also marks the need for introspection" (422). Eventually, Norman grows suspicious, attacks Sam and goes into the house. Lila hides in the fruit cellar, where she finally finds Mrs. Bates: a stuffed corpse. Meanwhile, Norman Bates dressed as "Mother" tries to kill Lila, but Sam stops him from doing it. Finally, the audience realizes the truth about Norman's psychotic state and his past actions. Even so the feeling of emotional sympathy persists. The rest of the film is an equivocation on Norman's responsibility for the brutal killings we have witnessed, some would argue an obfuscation of the whole question of individual responsibility.

2. Murder as Sin

Patricide, matricide, the murder of spouses and intimate friends, the elements which Hitchcock plays with in these films have a biblical or primal sanction against them, as Claudius says of his murder of his brother in *Hamlet*. They might be said therefore to possess more than just the opprobrium of going against the social order – there should be an element of sacrilege, hell and

damnation in them, in the work of an artist frequently written about for his Catholicism.

In the three films murder is the event that disrupts all the harmony and the trigger for the action. *Rope* starts with the scream of a man, a primal scream: David Kentley is strangled with a rope by two of his college friends, Brandon and Philip, for the intellectual experience and thrill of it all. The spectator is shocked from the very beginning by the cruelty of the crime and hopes for an explanation for the murder. In *Strangers on a Train*, Bruno suggests that the perfect solution for their problems would be murder, the perfect murder: Bruno would kill Guy's first wife, while Guy would kill his father. One has the motive, the other executes the crime. Neither of them could be incriminated, since there would be no motive and they would have the perfect alibi. "To the man committed to a career in politics, Bruno represents a tempting overthrow of all responsibility" (Wood: 87). At this point we begin to understand that Bruno is a disturbed character (his father tells his mother: "He should be sent somewhere for treatment, before it's too late!") who embodies the destructiveness, the subversion and the evil that exists in every human being. On the other hand, Bruno embodies Guy's most dark desires, which he cannot admit even to himself. As Wood acknowledges

Bruno is certainly a character in his own right, realized in detail with marvelous precision; but he also represents the destructive, subversive urges that exist, though suppressed in everybody: he is an extension, an embodiment, of desires already existing in Guy (Wood: 87-88).

While Bruno defies society and morality through his murderous proposal ("What is a life or two, Guy? Some people are better off dead."), a line which echoes Harry Lime's temptation of Holly Martins in *The Third Man* (1948), Guy dismisses it as a kind of joke, not to be taken seriously, but as we may later conclude, not forcefully enough, and soon his life will be invaded by chaos, disorder and darkness.

In *Psycho*, a sudden and unexpected shift in the trajectory of the film occurs. Norman watches Marion through a hole, appropriately concealed behind a painting representing a voyeuristic scene: another peeping tom, and another figure deficient in moral conscience. Spoto acknowledges that it was

a painting of Susanna and the elders, the biblical story (...) of a woman overtaken in her bath by voyeurs whose passions were aroused as they

spied on her from a secret place as she prepared to bathe. The artistic representation of voyeurism and sexual exploitation is thus replaced, in the world of this film, by the action itself; and the knife murder, therefore, is deliberately recorded as a stylized rape scene (424).

While Marion takes her shower she is suddenly attacked by a person that we cannot identify but that we suppose to be Mrs. Bates, who stabs her repeatedly, and runs away. We see the blood going down the plughole or drain and Marion falling dead. Many critics find a strong sexual undertow in this attack. Wood sees the murder as

primarily a sexual act, a violent substitute for the rape that Norman dare not carry out, and secondarily as the trapped being's desire to destroy a woman who has achieved the freedom he will never achieve: a point that gives added irony to the fact that it is her awareness of Norman that gives Marion that freedom (148).

We are shocked by these events, but also disoriented: everything we believed we knew about the film goes with Marion's life-blood and shower-water down the drain. According to Wood, the drain represents through its "apparently bottomless darkness, the potentialities for horror that lie in the depths of us all, and which have their source in sex" (149). This crime is in fact invested with heavy sexual connotations. Wood further adds that "*Psycho* derives most of its power from its sexual implications and overtones – from the impossibility, for Norman Bates, of a normal sexual relationship" (66). Krohn points out that

Hitchcock's most inspired visual metaphor was to make the shadow's stabbing thrusts, as the screenplay had said, an attack on the movie screen, represented by the shredded curtain and then by the white expanse of Marion's unmarked belly, with the knife poised to strike at her navel. Apart from the sexual significance of Norman striking at Marion's womb and at the scar which symbolizes separation from the mother, the navel is also an eye. Logically, when the attack is over the victim is represented by her dead eye (230).

A moment later the camera seems to regain conscience, along with the audience, and regain its power: "the power of the camera reasserts itself in the slow, virtuoso dolly to the money and then to the window, through which we hear and see Norman responding to 'Mother's' crime" (230). This much-discussed scene and its implications are further commented on by Wood who argues that

From her point of view – which is after all that from which we have been watching the film – the murder has no dramatic, symbolic, or thematic justification. If she were still in her compulsive state, if she had not just been released from it and made her free decision to return the money, the murder could be taken as having some validity as retribution (though grossly disproportionate), or as a symbolic representation of the irrevocability of her descent into the chaos world. But Marion is saved. It is partly because the murder is (...) entirely arbitrary and unpredictable that its effect is so shattering. We are made to feel at that moment the precariousness, the utter unreasonableness, of life (153-154).

Furthermore, Wood comments on the unpredictability of life that Hitchcock loved to represent, “This disturbing sense of precariousness, of unpredictability, is of course very common in Hitchcock, who delights in disrupting a normal, everyday atmosphere with some alarming event. But usually, hitherto, the event has some justification.” Wood then establishes a comparison with the situation in *Strangers on a Train*, “If Guy Haines meets Bruno Anthony, it is because something of Bruno exists already in him (...). But the murder of Marion Crane is in no way and to no extent either provoked or deserved” (154). This undeserved murder is followed by another murder, equally shocking and violent, Arbogast’s murder.

3. Shadows and Chaos

While in *Rope* the opposition between shadow and light is not patent (besides the act of shutting out the light when they close the curtains), in *Strangers on a Train*, a moody monochromatic film, it obviously symbolizes right and wrong, good and evil. From this perspective, Guy usually belongs to the world of light, while Bruno belongs to the world of shadow, but sometimes they step into the opposite world. Wood points out that “In their first conversation, as they face each other, the cross-cutting between them gives us Guy’s face unshadowed, Bruno’s crossed with lines of shadow like the shadow of bars.” But on several occasions Bruno will have to go into the world of light in order to obtain what he wants. “He is continually, in these early stages of the film, associated with shadows and with darkness; the development of the film can partly be seen in terms of his forcing himself into the light for recognition” (88). Just as Bruno has to come into the light, Guy also goes into the dark world on several occasions. “Furthermore, while the

two Charlies in *Shadow of a Doubt* located two moral realities within a single family, *Strangers on a Train* locates those double realities in separate social and political arenas that Hitchcock overlaps" (Spoto: 328).

Just before the family meeting at the Senator's house, Guy had been talking to Bruno, who had been waiting for him outside his house, in the shadowy part of the street:

we see Guy reaching his rooms in Washington. On one side of the street, stately, respectable houses; towering in the background, on the right of the screen, the floodlit dome of the Senate House, the life to which Guy aspires, the world of light and order. On the other side of the street, deep shadow and tall iron-barred gates from behind which Bruno calls (Wood: 90).

When Guy approaches him, we realise that while Bruno belongs in the dark, shadowy, behind bars, an outcast of society, Guy is in the part of light, but suddenly, as the police appear and look for him, he steps hurriedly into the other side. Wood comments that

The light-and-darkness symbolism – Guy turning from the lighted doorway of the house toward the shadow, away from the Senate House - is simple, but not naïve or ridiculous, and handled naturally and unobtrusively. Bruno beckons, a shadow among shadows. Again we see him with bars across his face: at the start of the ensuing dialogue he is behind the bars, Guy in the open. [...] The phone rings in Guy's rooms, a police car approaches, stops outside, and Guy promptly joins Bruno behind the bars, in shadow: a free man. He says, "You've got me acting like I'm a criminal," and we have a subjective shot of the police from Guy's position behind the bars. The scene gives a beautifully exact symbolic expression to Guy's relationship to Bruno and what he stands for (90-91).

When Guy receives the phone call from Ann giving him the news about Miriam, the shadow and light opposition is also evident: "Right of screen: a large, lighted lamp, Guy holding the receiver to his ear, Ann's voice coming through. Left of screen: heavy shadow, Miriam's spectacles dangling downward in Guy's other hand. The hands remind us of a pair of scales" (Wood: 91). Also, when Guy's wife, Miriam, refuses to give him the divorce he wants, Guy releases his repressed anger and frustrations, confessing to Ann that he felt he could strangle Miriam. His moral fastidiousness is forgotten and the dark side of the character comes to light. The dark desire vocalized by Guy is concretised by Bruno, "an agent for the

execution of Guy's desires" (Wood: 88). Spoto says that "Walker is Granger's 'shadow,' activating what Granger wants, bringing out the dark underside of Granger's potentially murderous desires" (328).²

While Guy travels on a train returning to Washington, Bruno follows Miriam and her two male friends to a fairground. This fairground, with all its distractions, easy forms of amusement and fantasy, symbolizes Miriam's life, the disorder and the pursuit of fun that guide her life, and also it is a tawdry social milieu and a life from which Guy wants to escape:

The fairground and amusement park is a symbolic projection of Miriam's world: a world of disorder, of the pursuit of fun and cheap glamor as the aim of life, of futility represented by the circular motion of roundabout and Great Wheel that receive such strong visual emphasis in almost every shot. [...] Through Miriam, Hitchcock evokes a whole social milieu, small town life in all its unimaginativeness and restriction (Wood: 88-89).

Spoto goes further in the interpretation of the fairground as "a major symbol of a contrasting domain." He even states that Hitchcock "drew the tradition of the fairground as the place where the demented aspects of life are concentrated and expressed, where all the Dionysian riots and year-long repressions are set free" from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* or Goethe's *Faust*, among others. Furthermore, he says that, as he had already used it in *The Ring*, *Murder*, *Saboteur*, and *Stage Fright*, "This is the place (...) where the underlying grotesquerie is enjoyed, where Walker travels to a murderous underworld and unleashes demonic forces" (329). Bruno telephones Guy, writes urgent letters to him, sends him a plan of the house and a key and turns up wherever he is ("You're spoiling everything...You're making me come out into the open") in order to force him to fulfil his part of the agreement: from Bruno's demented point of view, it is Guy who is in the wrong, since he is not corresponding to what had been previously agreed.

Walker inhabits the world of darkness, marked by the shadows that crisscross his face, the gothic gloominess of his Arlington mansion, and the boat – *Pluto* – that he takes to commit murder and that relates him to the god and household of the dead; he is the counterpart of Granger, who inhabits the world of light, represented by bright, open-air tennis games, light-colored attire, and formal Washington dinner parties (Spoto: 328).

² Philip in *Rope* and Guy in *Strangers on a Train* are played by the same actor, Farley Granger.

Wood states that “Bruno’s symbolic progress, each step bringing him closer and clearer – telephone, distant figure, closer figure lurking among shadowy pillars, figure sitting in full sunlight, young man in conversation with Ann, intruder from the chaos world into the world of order – represents the emergence of all we want concealed: our own suppressed, evil desires” (93). Visually the world of order and light is invaded by the world of chaos and darkness through Bruno’s encroachment. “And Walker is photographed in one visually stunning shot as a malignant stain on the purity of the white-marble Jefferson Memorial, as a blot on the order of things” (Spoto: 328).

Under pressure, Guy finally takes a decision, and that night he goes to the Anthony’s house, apparently in order to kill Bruno’s father. Guy seems to be stepping into his personal underworld: “the spectator’s uncertainty as to what Guy is going to do corresponds to the character’s own inner uncertainty” (Wood: 96). But in the end Guy maintains his moral values and tries to warn Bruno’s father about his son’s murderous intentions. However, in the darkness of the bedroom he finds not Mr. Anthony but Bruno, who promises revenge. Ann also goes into the world of shadows by going to the Anthony’s mansion. There, Bruno sows the seeds of discord by telling Ann that it was Guy who killed Miriam and that he asked for his help in retrieving a lighter he dropped during the murder, the lighter with Guy and Ann’s initials on it that Bruno had kept since their conversation on the train. Guy realises that Bruno is planning to incriminate him by putting the lighter on the island where Miriam was killed and that he has to get to the island before Bruno does. Guy “must reenter the chaos world in order to retrieve” the lighter, “thereby risking final submersion” (Wood: 98). However, he has an important tennis match that he cannot miss, or the police would be alerted, so he has to win the match quickly in order to get to the island in time. The cross-cutting between the tennis game and Bruno’s journey creates a different sort of suspense. Guy plays tennis in an unnaturally quick and nervous way, on a tennis court illuminated by sunshine and light, which has its obvious connotations: Guy is fundamentally a creature of the light and fair-play. Still, when Bruno tries to reach the lighter he has dropped down a drain on the journey to the island, we hope that he can recover it and feel relieved when he finally does. The drain with its bars

also symbolises the dark and conflicted side of each of us. “The tension we feel now is not uncomplicated by conflicting responses (who hasn’t *wanted* Bruno to reach the lighter?), but the struggle has become clear and simple, the forces of good and evil are now separate and clearly aligned” (Wood: 97). Maxford makes the same point, that “Hitchcock cleverly causes something of a dilemma for the audience, in that they will Bruno to reach the lighter, knowing that he is going to use it to incriminate Guy” (247). Wood acknowledges that “the cutting between sunny open court and shadowy enclosed drain carries powerfully evocative overtones: underlying the whole action of the film, we can see as its basis the struggle for dominance between superego and id.” (97).

Spoto remarks that “at the finale, the fairground is the place where the cycle of lunacy is broken, the whirling carousel destroyed so that normality may be restored. Walker’s presence has set the orbit out of control; order must be re-established” (329). While Bruno waits for darkness in order to go to the island, Guy is trying to reach it, symbolically, before darkness falls. In the queue for the island Bruno is recognised by the boatman who alerts the police. Bruno tries to hide on the carousel, but Guy follows him. Thinking that the boatman is referring to Guy, the police try to shoot him but it is the operator that is killed. Spinning out of control, the carousel eventually breaks down, while Bruno and Guy fight for the lighter. The out of control carousel symbolizes the world of chaos. Like the carousel, Bruno’s life ‘breaks down’; as indeed Guy’s could have broken down: Bruno dies “obstinately refusing repentance” (Wood: 98); Guy recovers the lighter and is free to go on with his life. Peace and morality are apparently restored; ambiguous good has won, seductive evil has lost. Hollywood norms have been placated, and a satisfying artistic complexity has not been sacrificed.

In *Psycho*, shadows and chaos seem to invade most of the film through night and darkness, namely during Marion’s long drive and in the subsequent scenes. There is also some symbolism in her costumes, namely in her underwear. While she is undressing we can see that her undergarments are black: she is a bad girl, the good girl from the initial shots has disappeared. As in *Strangers on a Train* the white/light, symbolizing good, opposes the black/dark, symbolizing corruption. Costume designer Rita Riggs, quoted by McGilligan, states that “[t]here

was great equivocation (...) about whether Janet would wear a black or white bra and slip in the opening. (...) Mr. Hitchcock finally choose white for the opening, black for after she steals the money. It was strictly for character statement. He had an obsession for the 'good' girl or the 'bad' girl" (587). Although we are aware that what she is about to do is wrong, we do not condemn her for it, on the contrary, we understand her. This identification is aided by the unsavoury exchanges of the brash sugardaddy at the office, and by our sense that, unlike Marion, his daughter has it easy. As in *Strangers on a Train*, we feel sympathy for the wrongdoer. Janet Leigh states that it was the "lack of complete abandon with Sam" that may have led the audience to think "I wonder if he really loves her that much"; consequently "[i]t made Marion even more sympathetic, which Hitch was very concerned about her being" (McGilligan: 592).

Everybody has a good and a bad side. According to Hitchcock "There's a devil in every one of us" (Spoto: 505), a shadow as it were waiting for the appropriate moment to appear.

4. Guilt and Punishment

Some of the characters in the three films feel guilt and try to seek redemption for their sins; others are not strong enough to do it, and others are not aware at all of the moral turpitude of what they have done. Guilt is often a central element in Hitchcock's films, with their paradigmatically 'wrongly accused' protagonists who nevertheless share in what they have not done. Films titles like *I Confess* and *The Wrong Man* and *Suspicion* highlight this, as the symbolic dimensions of unconsciousness and loss of control/balance are reflected in titles like *Torn Curtain* or *Rear Window* or *Vertigo* or *Stage Fright* or *Frenzy*.

The murderers in *Rope* have it all planned; they hide the body in a large chest in the middle of their living room. The two characters react differently in relation to what they have just done: while Philip seems to have some second thoughts, some doubts, Brandon seems to be proud of having committed that crime. Their macabre plan is to dump the body in the Hudson River. Meanwhile, they throw a party for David Kentley's family and friends, serving the food from the

top of the chest where the body is hidden. The chest is not locked, so everyone at the party can open it at any moment. Brandon does not show any kind of regret or guilt; however Philip is clearly afraid of detection and insecure about their actions as well as their motives. Philip almost confesses to the truth when Rupert questions him, but then Brandon gives some books to Mr. Kentley, tied with the rope with which they have strangled his only son, and he is forestalled. Psychologically, Philip is the weaker and more apprehensive of the conspirators, in opposition to Brandon, who reveals himself as a 'cold-blooded' murderer, only feeling nervous in the presence of his mentor.

After the party, Brandon and Philip celebrate the fact that they have committed the perfect murder, organized a party with the body right in the middle of it and apparently no one suspected anything. They feel superior human beings; they can make their own moral codes to live by. Condon and Sangster comment that "The question of the nature of the Nietzschean superman, discussed previously in *Lifeboat*, is readdressed here. In this case, it's a pair of successful, all-American boys who believe they are the *Übermenschen*, the supermen. Once again, it's their own hubris that brings about their destruction" (152).

As Brandon and Philip prepare to take the body out of the chest, Rupert returns, looking for his cigarette case. While Philip panics, Brandon is determined not to be caught. Rupert looks for his cigarette case, finds it and starts a conversation with the two murderers, trying to goad them into giving themselves away. When Brandon suggests that he tries to guess what has happened, or rather, how he, Rupert, would have done it, he guesses almost everything. Furthermore, he has the murder weapon in his pocket. Philip completely panics, takes the gun Brandon had loaded and points it at both of them. It is interesting that Philip turns on both of them as his tormentors. However, Rupert fights with him and manages to gain control of the situation. He opens the chest and is horrified at what he sees. Throughout the film the spectator is teased with conflicting emotions, which put into question our moral sense:

The unmotivated crime is at once so heinous that its perpetrators become hateful. Yet we don't want the crime to be discovered. James Stewart is a likeable, though lightweight, character, and we hope that he will figure out what the murderers have done. The situation is contradictory, a quagmire of

mixed emotions producing tension in the audience until the characters on the screen absolve it for us' (Harris; Lasky: 144).

Hitchcock again manages to make the audience identify with the two murderers, but also with Rupert, the compromised detective figure. So, there is an opposition: on the one hand the audience hopes that the two murderers are able to get away with their plan, on the other hand, the audience hopes that Rupert finds out what they have done. Rupert is more than a former teacher, "Hitchcock's film does take the crucial step of making him the former housemaster of all four young men – David, Kenneth, Philip, Brandon – and thus, effectively, their surrogate father" (McGilligan:410). In fact Rupert seems to have played a rather significant part in their lives, since

It is Rupert who remembers that Brandon had a "chest complex" as a boy, a weakness for bones in bloody chests in his fireside stories; it's Rupert's suspicious scrutiny that reduces the swaggering Brandon to stuttering guilt; and it's Rupert who offers the film's thoughtful, Hitchcockian articulation of goodness ("an obligation to the society we live in") and evil ("something deep inside you from the very start") (McGilligan: 410).

In the end, "[d]evastated that his theories have been so twisted" (Condon; Sangster: 151) and feeling the burden of responsibility and guilt, Rupert fires a number of shots outside the window, and waits for the police to arrive.

In *Strangers on a Train*, Bruno does not show any kind of regret or guilt throughout the entire film, not even at the moment he is about to die. At the fairground, where she is about to be murdered, Miriam, Guy's ex-wife, realises she is being followed and a seduction scene occurs, displaying the coquetry that we have already suspected her of ("The overtly sexual invitations of Laura Elliot in *Strangers on a Train*, visually detailed with surprising explicitness, had invited - almost justified - her strangling by Robert Walker" [Spoto: 414]). Therefore, when Bruno strangles her ("the strangling is invested with a clear sexual significance" [Wood: 89]), we almost feel that she got what she deserved, an idea vocalized later on by Barbara³, Ann's sister, who is immediately reprehended by her father, Senator Morton, who represents, "like Cedric Hardwicke in *Rope*, the film's voice

³ Alfred Hitchcock's own daughter Patricia Hitchcock plays Barbara in *Strangers on a Train* and Marion's office-mate in *Psycho*.

of decency" (McGilligan: 450). In this way, some kind of normal moral code is re-established in the film that deals in chronic moral distortion. "The moral point is made clearly when Senator Morton rebukes Barbara for saying, of Miriam, 'She was a tramp'" (Wood: 91). Barbara's character has the function of expressing clearly, "directly and unhypocritically, what everyone – including the spectator – is slightly ashamed to find himself thinking: that it is really an admirable thing from all points of view that Miriam is dead". Furthermore, and still according to Wood, "Her frank and shocking remarks recall Bruno's justification of killing – 'Some people are better off dead' – and therefore involve the spectator with Bruno; they also prompt the senator's rebuke – 'She was a human being'", who adds "even the most unworthy of us has a right to life and the pursuit of happiness", to which Barbara answers, "From what I hear she pursued it in all direction". Wood explains that "In other words, conflicting, apparently mutually exclusive responses are set up in the spectator, with disturbing results" (92). This scene provokes a conflict within the spectator according to Wood, "We respond strongly to Barbara's nonsense honesty, but we are made ashamed of that response. It is this conflict within the spectator that is the essence of the ensuing suspense: we, as well as Guy, are implicated in Miriam's murder" (92-93) since we are unable to resolve this moral dilemma in a satisfactory way. Also we fall back on traditionally sanctioned and facile associations of sexual openness with moral worthlessness, which one imagines, if taken in the right spirit, is the moral point of Christ's association with and redemption of prostitutes in the New Testament. Not that the Christian church has paid much attention to this tolerance.

Although Guy is innocent, he acts as if he were guilty. In fact, he can never be entirely innocent because he has desired what finally happened. Like Jimmy Carter's famous confession, he has sinned in his heart, if not in deed. Hitchcock comments that "Though Bruno has killed Guy's wife, for Guy, it's just as if he had committed the murder himself. As for Bruno, he's clearly a psychopath" (Truffaut: 293). The fact that Guy does not go to the police after Bruno tells him they are in it together is another obvious sign of his guilt and responsibility, as well as of his fear of losing what he stands on the brink of: a new family and a new career in politics. His incrimination is stressed at every moment, becoming a burden that he finds

too difficult to carry alone. “As for his guilt, Hitchcock makes it very clear that what he can’t bear is not the idea that he has been indirectly involved, at any rate by desire, in the death of a human being, but the fear of being found out: it is the only feeling he reveals in his conversation with Bruno, and all that he and Ann reveal in this scene” (Wood: 91). Truffaut remarks that almost all Hitchcock films “center on an interchangeable killing, with one character who has committed the crime and another who might just as well have been guilty of it” (293). Although Guy has an alibi, it proves to be pointless: the drunken professor he travelled with does not remember seeing him, so, from the police’s point of view, he may be guilty (he is at the very least guilty of hiding the criminal’s identity from them). Wood concludes that *Strangers on a Train* is essentially a story about ‘the falsely accused man’ and also about a psychopath. Wood also refers to the ‘double chase’ plot structure: “the hero, pursued by the police, pursues the real villain(s). He is always innocent of the crime of which he is accused but (perhaps ambiguously) guilty of something else: (...) at the most of a *desire* that the crime be committed” (Wood: 241) and Bruno is only the instrument for the fulfilment of that desire.

Bruno later invites himself to a party at the Morton’s house. “Bruno’s appearance at the party marks his final eruption into the world of order: the demand for recognition of the universality of guilt by a world that rejects such an assumption” (Wood: 93). At the party he asks a judge upsetting questions and starts a conversation with two older women about the perfect way to commit a crime (his area of expertise) recommending strangulation and exemplifying it on the throat of one of the women. Meanwhile, Barbara stands in front of him and Bruno is reminded, by her resemblance to Miriam, of the crime he had committed. Going into a trance, he almost strangles Mrs. Cunningham, while Barbara goes into shock, feeling that he was strangling her. Barbara herself is thus symbolically punished for wishing Miriam dead, committing exactly the same offence as Guy. Spoto comments that Barbara Morton’s “physical resemblance to the murdered woman very nearly precipitates a doubling of the first crime” (324). Besides the obvious parallel established between Barbara and Miriam, due not only to their physical resemblance, but especially to the similar glasses, there is also a parallel between Mrs. Cunningham and Bruno’s mother, both are “rich, spoiled, foolish,

and indulgent” and Bruno easily establishes a relationship with such women: “he is able to handle her so adroitly because he is used to managing his mother, manipulating her reactions”. Furthermore, “This is the kind of relationship he can manage, a relationship based entirely on power, wielded through a combination of cunning and insidious, self-insinuating charm – his ability to involve others in his sickness” (Wood: 94). And Hitchcock, through Bruno, manages to involve, once again, the spectator with the character in a scene that Wood describes as “a superb example of the Hitchcock spectator trap” (93). Wood analyses how Hitchcock achieves this: “First, belief in established order has been undermined in the deflation of the judge,” after that “the dialogue with Mrs. Cunningham and her friend, because of its light tone, gives us license to accept the notion of common guilt as something of a joke, to connive at it, allowing ourselves to be implicated in the ‘game’ of murdering Mrs. Cunningham, who is anyway a rich, trivial, stupid old woman.” Finally, this ‘game’ seems to end when the audience becomes aware that Bruno has nearly killed another woman: “Then abruptly the joke rebounds on us: we have nearly been implicated in another murder: swift modulation of tone has seldom been used to such disturbing effect” (93-94). Consequently,

We are horrified to find that we have momentarily identified ourselves with Bruno (the sequence contains a number of subjective shots, where we are placed in his position). We have the feeling, even, that we, through a lack of vigilance, have released these destructive forces by conniving at them (94).

Eventually, both Barbara and the audience seem to be punished for their feelings:

the final emphasis is on Barbara; and we recall that earlier it was she who was used to make explicit our conventionally suppressed feeling that Miriam’s murder was all for the best. She seemed before to give validity to the release of the anarchic forces of desire: now she is punished by the very forces she helped release, and we with her. (Wood: 94).

Only through rigorous and continuous vigilance is it possible to avoid the seductive evil that always seems more attractive and gratifying.

Guy has to accompany Bruno outside and later on he has to tell the truth to Ann, not because he feels guilty and needs to talk with somebody, but because there is no other way out.

It is the near-strangling of Mrs. Cunningham that forces the spectator to come to terms with his attitude to subversive desire, and prompts Guy,

under pressure from Ann, to divulge the truth to her: without, however, acknowledging any personal guilt, of which he obviously remains quite unaware (Wood: 95).

Ann also tries to stop Bruno, talking with his mother, but she considers it as one of his practical jokes. "In Mrs. Anthony's insanity we see (as we are to see it later, more extremely, in the amalgam of Norman Bates and his mother at the end of *Psycho*) the ultimate extension of the chaos world" (Wood: 96-97). Condon and Sangster note that "As usual, Hitch blames the parents, a disciplinarian father and a dotty mother who pampers her son, never taking him seriously and humouring him with his ridiculous plans to fly to the moon and blow up the White House" (174). Bruno's mother rejects completely any responsibility. "The woman's very existence depends on the complete rejection of all value judgements, the final denial of responsibility. In fact, 'irresponsibility' is the word she uses to excuse Bruno: with a smile of maternal indulgence, a little knowing shake of the head, she says, 'Sometimes he's terribly irresponsible.' To which Ann returns a moment later, 'He's *responsible* for a woman's death'" (Wood: 97). It is however a responsibility that Bruno will never acknowledge.

Psycho, Hitchcock's most famous and shocking film, "begins with the normal and draws us steadily deeper and deeper into the abnormal" (Wood: 142-143). An aerial image of Phoenix, the city named after the mythic bird that dies and comes back to life, is the first shot of *Psycho*. Then, as if looking for something, the camera approaches a window and we enter a room:

this could be any place, any date, any time, any room: it could be *us*. The forward track into darkness inaugurates the progress of perhaps the most terrifying film ever made: we are to be taken forward and downward into the darkness of ourselves (Wood: 142).

There, we can see two lovers and we feel somehow uncomfortable to be witnessing this scene, which has something of the intimate, illicit and furtive about it. The viewer becomes a kind of voyeur, a peeping tom, although involuntarily, who suddenly sees himself in the middle of a private scene: the man is half naked and the woman is in her white undergarments. At the time the film was released, these scenes were extremely daring and only passed the censors with difficulty. We realise that, in fact, this is a young couple that meets in a hotel room in her

lunch hour. Wood comments that “the lovers are meeting surreptitiously, doing things that must be concealed from the outer world”. This “provides a further link (still within the bounds of normality) with Norman Bates”, who also has some guilty secrets. “[I]n both cases the ‘secrets,’ normal and abnormal, are sexual in nature” (143). Marion is not happy with their relationship, she wants more, however her boyfriend, Sam Loomis recalls that they do not have the financial means to get married. Sam is a man with a rapacious and destructive ex-wife, like Guy. Marion is disappointed at him, and so are we, since we already start to identify with the girl who sees her dreams shattered by a practical detail. “Everything is done to encourage the spectator to identify with Marion” (143).

Marion goes back to the office where she works and listens to her talkative work partner talk about her marriage, as well as a wealthy client who boasts about his money and his daughter’s marriage. Through this dialogue Hitchcock provokes the feeling that it is rather unfair that some have so much while others cannot be happy because they do not have the minimum needed. Therefore, “Our moral resistance is skilfully undermined during the office scene. The man with the money – Cassidy – is a vulgar, drunken oaf; he has plenty more; his boast that he ‘buys off unhappiness,’ that his about-to-be-married ‘baby’ has ‘never had an unhappy day,’ fills us with a sense of unfairness.” However, appearances do not always correspond to reality and “we realize how far his boast probably is from the truth: whatever he is, Cassidy does not strike us as a happy man” (143-144). Her boss trusts her with forty thousand dollars belonging to the client, so that she is to take it to the bank. Marion takes the money and leaves earlier. “By minimizing our moral opposition to the notion of stealing \$40,000, Hitchcock makes it possible for us to continue to identify with Marion, involving ourselves in her guilt as easily and unthinkingly as she herself becomes involved” (144). We are never sure about the moment when she decides to steal the money; furthermore, she does not seem to be determined or fully aware of what she is going to do. “There is no clear-cut moment of decision (...) she constantly hesitates over it: her actions tell us that she has committed herself, but she doesn’t consciously accept that commitment” (144). She seems lost, she seems trapped in a decision that may change her life, as is in fact the case, although not quite in the way she expects it to change.

As she drives in her car, supposedly in order to meet Sam, her thoughts are vocalized, so that we can be aware of what is going on in her mind, so that we can 'become' Marion. Furthermore, Wood comments that we are restricted "almost exclusively to her vision and her emotions". She seems "trapped in a pattern of behavior" from which she cannot extricate herself, and which she cannot view objectively (155). She imagines the reactions and the commentaries that will take place when her action is discovered (among other thoughts, "I'll replace it with her fine soft flesh": Wood acknowledges that "Marion's verdict on herself, hideously disproportionate to the crime, will find its hideous enactment" [145]). She drives for hours, almost in a trance, until she cannot take it any longer and has to stop. When she wakes up, she is confronted by a policeman who, suspicious that something is wrong with her, follows her. Feeling nervous and guilty, Marion continues to look as if she is not completely aware of what she is doing. She buys another car in the presence of the policeman and carries on driving. In the middle of a rainstorm she makes a wrong turn, and seeing the Bates Motel she decides to stay there for the night. Contingency is important here because the road sign should have been switched off but by accident was not. Marion meets the strange owner of the Motel, Norman Bates and they have a conversation in its parlour, surrounded by stuffed birds. Spoto asserts that "The sexual wordplay is obvious – 'stuffing birds' is the hobby of a sexual psychopath – and the gazing eyes of stuffed crows and owls can see nothing" (425). Hitchcock acknowledges that the birds "were like symbols. Obviously Perkins is interested in taxidermy since he'd filled his own mother with sawdust" and he adds that "the owl, for instance, has another connotation. Owls belong to the night world; they are watchers, and this appeals to Perkins' masochism. He knows the birds and he knows that they're watching him all the time. He can see his own guilt reflected in their knowing eyes" (Truffaut: 434). The owl here in Hitchcock's gloss seems symbolically to represent God, who sees everything and knows everything, while Norman is the sinner. At the same time, by using the 'power' to take lives, Norman seems to arrogate the position of God.

In her room, observed by Norman, Marion undresses and has a shower, as if she wanted to wash away all the evil thoughts and actions that have dominated

her for the last hours, as if those waters were the baptismal waters in which she would purify her body and especially her soul. "We see Marion under the shower, and her movements have an almost ritualistic quality; her face expresses the relief of washing away her guilt" (Wood: 146). Janet Leigh, quoted by McGilligan, acknowledges that "Marion had decided to go back to Phoenix, come clean, and take the consequences, so when she stepped into the tub it was as if she were stepping into the baptismal waters. The spray beating down on her was purifying the corruption from her mind, purging the evil from her soul. She was like a virgin again, tranquil, at peace" (593). McGilligan further comments that "The 'shower as baptism' was an idea Hitchcock extrapolated from Robert Bloch's novel [also called *Psycho*] where Mary Crane decides 'that's what she was going to do right now, take a nice, long, hot shower. Get the dirt off her hide, just as she was going to get the dirt cleaned out of her insides. Come clean, Mary. Come clean as snow'" (593). However while she purges her guilt and evil, another kind of evil approaches and she is violently murdered by "Mother," Norman's other personality. After the murder, Norman comes in and cleans everything up in one of the film's longest and most painstaking sequences, as if he was cleaning away his guilt by making the room and bathroom return to its original state and colour: an immaculate white. He then puts the body into Marion's car and disposes of it in a landscape of near poetic desolation.

Hitchcock tried to give a logical explanation, if that is possible, to justify all the madness, and the moral dilemmas that his characters (heroes or villains) have had to face during the film. A psychiatrist, at the police station, tries to explain Norman's psychosis ("When the mind houses two personalities, there is always a conflict, a battle"), not only to his audience and to the film's audience in general but especially to the censors in order to placate them. With its introductory post-coital scene between Marion and Sam, the flushing of a toilet, nudity, Norman spying through a hole in the wall, transvestism and matricide, *Psycho* was a film that raised many anxieties in the minds of officialdom. While Marion achieves redemption, by recognising her guilt and taking the decision to assume responsibility for and the consequences of her actions; Norman never recognises his guilt, dominated by his mother's personality and lost in psychosis. Norman

does not feel guilt or responsibility for the murders because, in his distorted mind, it was not him who committed them, it was his mother.

In these three films what seems to emerge is the idea that it is not easy to determine a moral course of conduct. Although we have a basic notion of what is right and wrong, our real choices are not that simple. Even in our judgments of others, our moral sense seems easily detached from our emotional sympathies. In the three films, villainous impulses, whether they appear in notionally bad or good people, are always the object of interest. Alfred Hitchcock's art consists precisely in the deliberate manipulation of our feelings, with the purpose of exposing the superficiality and fickleness of some of our moral judgements. He plays the audience, 'like an organ' and, in a subtle and intelligent way, makes them realise that socially imposed moral values are a paper-thin veneer over some very dark drives and desires. The act of murder, and how we react to it, puts this moral confusion in the starkest terms.

Chapter III

Hitchcock: Aestheticizing Murder

“[I]f once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing, and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. Once begin upon this downward path, you never know where you are to stop. Many a man dated his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps he thought little of at the time.”

(Thomas De Quincey in ‘On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts,’ 23).

Apart from the ethical or moral side of the analysis I am offering, the murders committed in *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train* and *Psycho* have another side, an aesthetic one, based upon the consideration of murder as one of the fine arts as described by Thomas De Quincey in his essay on aesthetics ‘On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts,’ published in 1827 and republished in 1839. There, De Quincey establishes comparisons between poetry, painting or many other artistic manifestations and murder, which he also refers to as art. Although he proclaims himself to be on the side of morality and virtue and acknowledges that “murder is an improper line of conduct, highly improper,” and says that he does not “stick to assert that any man who deals in murder must have very incorrect ways of thinking, and truly inaccurate principles”, he also considers that murder “may also be treated aesthetically (...), that is, in relation to good taste” (4). He considers that any man can see that “one murder is better or worse than another, in point of good taste.” And he further adds that “Murders have their little differences and shades of merit, as well as statues, pictures, oratorios, cameos, intaglios, or what not” (21). He furthermore proposes to treat it aesthetically and concludes that something that morally is very shocking, “[w]hen tried by principles of Taste, turns out to be a very meritorious performance” (6). After commenting on a series of famous murders and murderers, he enumerates the principles of murder, “First, then, let us speak of the kind of person who is adapted to the

purpose of the murderer; secondly, of the place where; thirdly, of the time when, and other little circumstances” (17). A similar analysis is offered by Hitchcock’s contemporary George Orwell (1903-1950) in his essay ‘Decline of the English Murder,’ originally published in *Tribune*, on the 15th February 1946. There, after celebrating murder as a source of pleasure to the British reading public, he enumerates the most famous murderers and offers an analysis of the means and motives inherent to the murders they have committed. Eventually, he concludes that “The background of all these crimes (...) was essentially domestic; of twelve victims, seven were either wife or husband of the murderer” (www.netcharles.com/orwell/essays/decline-of-english-murder.htm, 2). Therefore, Orwell states that one can imagine the ‘perfect crime’ (in the family, through poisoning or strangling) and, based on his reasoning, he immediately outlines the typical ‘classic’ murder story and compares it with a story of a murder with no depth of feeling in it, concluding that this story will not be “so long remembered as the old domestic poisoning dramas, product of a stable society where the all-prevailing hypocrisy did at least ensure that crimes as serious as murder should have strong emotions behind them” (4), therefore having a compelling personal motive and not a casual one. People tend to remember the crimes committed between four walls at home, and tend to forget those they cannot readily understand, precisely those that have some artistic and aesthetic value, according to George Orwell.

Alfred Hitchcock, the master of representing murder, devoted most of his films to this theme but, surprisingly, the vast majority of murders in Hitchcock’s films occurs off-screen or are of extremely short duration. As Iain Morrisson acknowledges, “There were off-screen murders in *The Lodger*, *The 39 Steps*, *Rebecca*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Spellbound*, *Notorious*, *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*. There were shootings in *The 39 Steps*, *The Foreign Correspondent*, *North by Northwest* and brief strangulation sequences in *The Lady Vanishes* and *Rope*” (www.imagesjournal.com/issue09/features/artofmurder/notes.htm, 12). There are three films that have prolonged murder sequences, there are stabbings in *Blackmail*, *Dial M for Murder* and, of course, *Psycho*, and there is a strangling in

Strangers on a Train. *Torn Curtain* has a protracted fight sequence included just to show how difficult and long-drawn-out it is to kill someone without a weapon.

I would argue that Hitchcock is a respected director and artist, despite working with obscure materials and in a cinema 'subgenre', because the product he makes is highly aestheticized. Through this aestheticization a crime or a violence story becomes attractive and visually appealing, worthy of peer-group admiration and popular applause as well as commercially profitable, as I shall go on to show.

1. The Shooting Process: From No Cuts to Cross Cutting; Framings and Close-ups

Murder being the subject of most of Hitchcock films, more on-screen murders and explicit violence might be expected but this is not the case. Hitchcock himself explained that he could decrease screen violence as a film progressed because he had "transferred the violence from the screen to the mind of the audience" (Morrisson: 2). Violence can reside not in what is shown but in what the audience sees or believes it is witnessing. More interested in the camera and in the effects he could create than in the story or the characters, Hitchcock loved to manipulate the audience and is an acknowledged master of numerous techniques for achieving this, techniques he seemed always willing to take further and further. Each Hitchcock film features some special technical (usually visual) aspect like the set design in *Rear Window*, the special bird effects in *The Birds* or the camera work in *Rope*.

One of the most significant films in Alfred Hitchcock's career in respect of technique was *Rope*, a film that also represented a turning point in his career in other ways. It was not only his first Technicolor film, but also his first film as an independent producer (originally it was supposed to be *Under Capricorn*, starring Ingrid Bergman, but she was not available at the time, so Hitchcock decided to wait and work on another film), and thus the first film in which he could freely experiment with new creative techniques. Hitchcock declared to Truffaut, "I undertook *Rope* as a stunt; that's the only way I can describe it. I really don't know

how I came to indulge in it" (259). Hitchcock was an experimentalist and from the very beginning *Rope* represented a challenge to him. Displaying its own set of aesthetic rules, *Rope* is a film of ideas, rather than of action. The dialogues play an essential role in the film, which was based upon the play *Rope's End* by Patrick Hamilton (1929), and which was filmed somewhat like a play. As in the play, the action takes place in real-time, continuously, apparently without cuts, in order to create "the illusion that the audience is seeing the action as it would have done in the theatre, with no interruption" (Krohn: 106). Harris and Lasky, among others, consider that "Hitchcock decided to go against his principles of the cinema and pre-cut pictures" in order to "achieve this clocklike effect on the screen." So, "He shot *Rope* with no actual cuts and instead filmed ten-minute takes, the maximum amount of film (one thousand feet) that a camera will hold "(143). Everything had to be well planned, how the camera would move and how the effect of no cuts could be created. This effect was obtained by ending every ten-minute take in close-up on an actor's coat or on an object and opening with the same close-up of the same character or object, therefore creating a solid texture on the screen and masking most of the reel changes. Spoto, among others, states that "It would (...) provide him with the chance to produce quickly, economically, and in a daring new way: in uninterrupted ten-minute takes, and so that the eighty-minute action of the play, which is synchronous with real time, would also be presented in just eighty minutes of film time" (302). But it did not happen exactly like that and the presumption that the film, which is approximately eighty minutes long, consists of eight shots of ten minute takes, is not correct according to Wood, among others, who considers that "Including the credit shot (roughly three minutes; it has to be included because it is clearly 'within the diegesis,' establishing the environment and culminating in the camera's pan left to show the closed curtains from behind which issues David Kentley's death scream), there are eleven shots." And he discriminates the approximate length of each of these shots, "Only three of these (Nos. 2, 6, and 9) are over nine minutes long; one (No. 10, culminating in the flinging open of the chest lid by Rupert Cadell/James Stewart) is under five minutes; the last is under six. The remainder are all between seven and eight minutes" (349). However there are still disagreements among the critics as to the

length of each reel. The 'Wikipedia' also discriminates the cuts and reels present in the film after the scenes filmed in the street.

Reel	Beginning	End	Approximate duration
1	close up on David's strangulation	blackout on Brandon's back	9:34
2	black, pan off Brandon's back	close up on Kenneth: "What do you mean?"	7:51
3	unmasked cut, men crossing to Janet	blackout on Kenneth's back	7:18
4	black, pan off Kenneth's back	close up on Philip: "That's a lie."	7:08
5	unmasked cut, close up on Rupert	blackout on Brandon's back	9:57
6	black, pan off Brandon's back	three shot	7:33
7	unmasked cut, Mrs. Wilson: "Excuse me, Sir."	blackout on Brandon	7:46
8	black, pan off Brandon	close up on Brandon's hand holding a gun in his pocket	10:46
9	unmasked cut, close up on Rupert	blackout on lid of the chest	4:37
10	black screen, pan up lid of the chest	End	5:38

Fig.1

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/>)

Although there is not a consensus about the length of the reels, it is possible to conclude that they do not last for exactly ten minutes and that some

cuts are not masked at all. Nevertheless, in the end, the effect for all but film scholars was one of continuous shooting, where the length of the film corresponds to the time of the action.

The actors had to learn their lines and everyone involved in the film had to rehearse as if it was a theatre play: “there were ten days of rehearsal with the cameras, the actors, and the lighting. Then there were eighteen days of shooting” (Hitchcock, quoted by Truffaut: 266). Their timing had to be perfect, since any flaw would imply the shooting of the sequence from its very beginning. Hitchcock explained the process to Truffaut: “the technique of the camera movements was worked out, in its slightest details, well beforehand. We used a dolly and we mapped out our course through tiny numbers all over the floor, which served as guide marks” (265). The action is filmed from just one direction; it gives only one perspective, which heightens the impression for the spectator that he or she is watching a theatre play. Hitchcock filmed it using a three-strip Technicolor camera, which was designed to “roll through everything like a juggernaut”, as Hitchcock said in a 1948 article called “My Most Exciting Picture,” quoted by Krohn (106).

Displaying an incredible number of innovations at the time, *Rope* is commented on by Hitchcock’s critics as mainly a daring experiment, using new creative techniques, which generally are praised for their originality. According to McGilligan, “The technique was a success, the film a failure. Yet in the end *Rope* succeeded on Hitchcock’s own terms, as one of those pictures in which he challenged everybody, including himself. (...) *Rope* is a near masterwork, not without flaws, not for all tastes, but the singular experiment of a ceaselessly questing artist” (421). Nevertheless, *Rope* is considered thoroughly uncinematic by most of those critics. Harris and Lasky think of *Rope* as an ambitious experiment, though not an entirely successful one, and quote Howard Barnes, in the *New York Herald Tribune*: “*Rope* is ‘not one of his best, but it is the work of a master. Hitchcock has composed individual scenes with infinite care and craft in *Rope*, particularly in his use of color. One wishes that he had taken greater advantage of the motion picture form’.” Harris and Lasky conclude that “Although *Rope* is very uncinematic, without cutting or montage, it is an example of technical brilliance of which, more than any other director, Hitchcock was the master. Despite its

staginess, *Rope*, by the nature of its story, is a suspenseful tale” (143). Spoto argues that “[t]here is simply no tension, no point of view, no generation of feeling – although this derives as much from theme as from method” (302-303). Even James Stewart acknowledges that *Rope* was uncinematic, “I think he realized later that giving up the device of the cut was giving up the tool for pacing, for impact. It was worth trying – nobody but Hitch would have tried it. But it really didn’t work” (Spoto: 306). On the other hand, Truffaut comments in his conversations with Hitchcock that he does not agree that “*Rope* should be dismissed as a foolish experiment, particularly when you look at it in the context of your whole career: a director is tempted by the dream of linking all of a film’s components into a single, continuous action. In this sense, it’s a positive step in your evolution”. Nevertheless, he concludes that “weighing the pros and cons – and the practices of all the great directors who have considered the question seem to bear this out – it is true that the classical cutting techniques dating back to D. W. Griffith have stood the test of time and still prevail today” (266). In fact, although it has a special place in the hearts of film historians and theorists, *Rope* was alienating to the general public and there was a sort of consensus at the time of its release that it was a disappointment.

Even so, Wood believes it to be “one of the most cinematic of films” because it carries “one of the defining characteristics of the medium – its ability to use a camera as the eye of the spectator, to take him right into an action, show him round inside it as it were – to its ultimate conclusion” (78). Noël Coward, the dramatist and performer, was really impressed by Hitchcock’s technique and wrote in his diary: “Went out to Warner’s to see Hitchcock directing *Rope*...Really very exciting, a whole reel taken in one go without resetting lights...It cannot be applied to all pictures, but from the writer’s point of view it is wonderful” (quoted by Spoto: 306). Maxford comments that “*Rope* was not the artistic success originally envisaged” (223) and goes on to acknowledge that “[a]s a director, Hitchcock is also severely restricted by the ten-minute take” and he even enumerates “a few effective touches” (222) in the film which testify to Hitchcock’s brilliant use of detail, such as the

shot of the murder weapon hanging from the side of the chest; the shot of Brandon subsequently placing the rope in a kitchen drawer, the action of

which we see through a swinging door; the close-up of David's initials inside the hat wrongly given to Rupert, thus alerting him to the fact that David has been to the apartment; the gradual build up of lights on the Manhattan skyline; and the gradual build up of sound outside the apartment building following Rupert's firing of a gun from the window to attract attention" (222).

In fact, the camera moves continually focusing on the important actions or characters at the appropriate moment in the story. A good example of the power of the camera in conveying the characters' inner feelings or thoughts happens when it focuses on Mr. Kentley, who is notably disturbed, both by David's unexplainable absence and the theme of the conversation. This reminds the audience that his son David is dead and in the chest, in the living room of the murderers, where a party in his honour is taking place, while one of his murderers defends his right to commit murder because he is a superior human being. Rupert realises that Brandon is defending his point too seriously and becomes even more suspicious, just as he does when he and Mrs. Wilson try to open the chest and Brandon stops them. In this scene the camera stands close to the chest and the audience hear the dialogues almost as a background noise because what matters are the waitress's movements around the chest while she goes in and out of the room, removing the dishes and the food, creating suspense around the question: will she open the chest and discover the body or not?

Finally, when the guests start to leave the party, the camera accompanies them, especially Rupert, the last guest to leave, and focuses on his disturbed expression while holding in his hands the hat wrongly given to him, which has the initials D.K. in it. Near the end of the film another example of the power of the camera is given when it 'follows' Rupert's imagination through the room while, defied by Brandon, he guesses almost every detail of how Brandon and Philip have committed the murder. Making an evaluation of the film some years later, Hitchcock stated:

When I look back, I realize that it was quite nonsensical because I was breaking with my own theories on the importance of cutting and montage for the visual narration of a story. On the other hand, this film was, in a sense, pre-cut. The mobility of the camera and the movement of the players closely followed my usual cutting practice. In other words, I maintained the

rule of varying the size of the image in relation to its emotional importance within a given episode (Truffaut: 259, 261).

In fact, the camera becomes the spectators' eyes and focuses on what is important to the action, on the characters, objects or dialogues that matter at that precise moment of the story, leading the spectators to what Hitchcock wants them to see or to understand, thereby manipulating the audience. Furthermore, "[t]he camera, used constantly to link one action or gesture or glance to another in a continuous movement, generates terrific tension, the spectator's eye guided relentlessly to the significant detail at the significant moment" (Wood: 78). Hitchcock's high level of technical control as a director/artist in the art of film making, can find an echo in the murderer/artist who aims to commit the act of murder. Both artists desire to achieve 'perfection' in their planning and execution.

This level of control is also quite remarkable in *Strangers on a Train*, where the visual details have great importance. It was Alfred Hitchcock's great comeback film after the consecutive failures of *Under Capricorn* and *Stage Fright*. Harris and Lasky argue that although it was not a masterpiece, "it was, nevertheless, brilliant film-making and a gripping suspense film of the type people had come to expect from Hitchcock" (156). McGilligan, in contrast, considers that "[l]eading off the 1950s – the decade of his most sustained creativity – *Strangers on a Train* was a deceptive Hitchcock film: a run-for-cover that became one of his definitive masterworks" (450). Aesthetically this black and white film is very good, rich in all its visual details such as the tennis match sequence. The 'chiaroscuro' effect, similar to the effects achieved through painting, is obtained through a Manichean use of specific areas of light and darkness. Other examples of good visual details are the close up of the plug-hole in *Psycho* or the camera that follows ceaselessly the actors in *Rope*.

Apart from the exchange of guilt and murder (already referred to in the chapter 'Hitchcock: Doubtful Morality') as well as the arbitrary intersections of life being its main themes, this film manages to make good use of vocabulary and imagery related with criss-crossing, namely the initial shots, when two taxis arrive, one immediately after the other, and the camera focuses alternately on the shoes that get out of the taxis, go into the station and into the train. There, it goes on until

one of the monochromatic shoes touches one of the gaudy shoes, sparking the initiating situation of the film, the meeting of Guy and Bruno. These two men are characterized through their shoes. The initial shots, displaying originality and already implying wider interpretations about the story, are highly praised by critics such as Truffaut, as I already mentioned in the chapter 'Hitchcock: Doubtful Morality' (see page 27). These shots establish a parallel in visual terms. The shot of the train railways crossing symbolically represents the crisscross of lives and prepares the audience for the story. Hitchcock acknowledges that "The shots of the rails in *Strangers on a Train* were the logical extension of the motif with the feet. Practically, I couldn't have done anything else" (Truffaut: 285). There are some other shots that suggest the criss-cross motif, some visual details that are used in order to connect Bruno and Guy, such as when Bruno looks at his watch, after leaving the fairground, which is followed by a cut to Guy, on a train, looking at his. Also, the monogrammed lighter, frequently shot in extreme close-up during the film, in which it has a central symbolic and functional role, has two crossed racquets on it.

Visually, there are many other unexpected and original sequences in this film. For instance, when, at the party, Guy punches Bruno in the face. The feeling is that he punched the camera and, consequently, the audience. This is followed by cutting and a close-up of Bruno and his fall from the reverse angle. Moreover there are other surprising shots such as when Guy goes to Bruno's mansion and, in the darkness of the house, lights a torch and points it at a map, employing it to trace the same track he is going to use, thereby involving the audience. Similarly, during the tennis match, the ball, the racquet, or the player seem to collide with the camera on several occasions. "As filmed, the game might also have been subjective in style, with shots of the ball from the racquet's point of view and shots of racquets swinging at the camera. Both players had rubber racquets for those shots, but only one of them made it into the sequence" (Krohn: 124,126). As in *Rope*, Hitchcock makes the best use of the camera in order to lead the spectator to see, hear and even think exactly as directed to do, therefore manipulating the audience as he loved to do.

It is mainly visually, through his camera, that Hitchcock cues a number of signs that give clues about what is going to happen throughout the film. When Guy and Bruno meet, on the train, there is a close-up on Bruno's tie and tie strangler. His tie was designed by Hitchcock himself and had lobsters on it, animals with claws, which can be used to grip and throttle their victims. Krohn notices this: "Hitchcock designed the garish necktie that Bruno sports in his first scene, featuring red lobsters on a blue background, then turned Bruno into a lobsterman when he is reflected in Miriam's glasses" (117). The 'tie-strangler' is a motif developed later in *Frenzy*, through a plot based on the activities of a tie-strangling serial killer. The title of the film itself indicates such a theme: if an 'l' is added to the word 'strangers,' it will become 'stranglers on a train'. Moreover, one of the posters of the film had a picture of Hitchcock hanging an 'l' over the word 'Strangers.' When Guy telephones Ann in order to tell her the news about Miriam's refusal to give him the divorce, Guy exclaims "I feel savage. I'd like to break her neck. I said I'd like to break her foul, useless little neck. I said I could strangle her" and this shot is followed by a close-up on Bruno's hands. Throughout *Strangers on a Train*, there are several close-ups on Bruno's hands, or on Bruno looking at them, namely a shot of his mother taking care of his nails and admonishing him, "I do wish you'd keep your hands quiet" (this sentence has a wider meaning than she intends to convey). Bruno says "I like them to look just right." At the fairground, Bruno exhibits his strength to Miriam and looks at his hands, a gesture that is emphasized by Hitchcock through a low camera angle; when he drops the lighter in the grate, there are several shots of his hand trying to reach it, and there are also some shots of Guy's hand, putting a gun in a drawer and taking it out, but the shots of Bruno's hands predominate, as does his more vivid character.

Other events will also provide clues to the characters and the audience so that they can gradually understand what is going on. Bruno's boat on his journey to the island is called 'Pluto'; Guy and Ann talk about Miriam's murder and whether Guy had anything to do with it; the incident with Bruno and Mrs. Cunningham's throat at the Morton's party, and Barbara's feeling that "His hands were on her throat and he was strangling me. He was looking at her first, then looked over at me. He went into a sort of trance. He thought he was murdering me", although she

does not fully understand the situation. While in *Rope* the murder occurs in the first minutes of the film and is an extremely brief scene, here it lasts a little longer but similarly there seems to be no violence. Hitchcock achieves this effect (it is implicit that a murder is a violent act) by concealing the murder through the camera angle and the close-up of Miriam's glasses that have fallen off. As I said, Bruno's hands seem to be the gigantic claws of a lobster. The spectator witnesses the murder reflected in one of the lenses, in a distorted and, following Iain Morrison's line, carnivalesque, fun-house perspective (3). Maxford thinks that the result is "one of Hitchcock's most iconographic images" (246). Simultaneously, Hitchcock is able to imply Bruno's strength and power over Miriam, as well as Miriam's hopelessness and the inevitability of her death. Morrison further remarks that "The camera angle, the reflected, distorted image, the absence of editing, the absence of the sounds of struggle, and the lighting all function to conceal the violence of the attack while simultaneously implying Bruno's strength and the inevitability of her death. Cinematic concealment is used to multiply the power of the killer" (3).

The film's climax, the carousel sequence, is one of the most elaborate and original in Hitchcock films. It symbolizes the chaos that has established itself in those characters' lives. When it collapses, everything can go back to normal for most of them, not for Bruno, who dies there. Hitchcock explained how this amazing, and "most complicated sequence," was filmed:

For rear-projection shooting there is a screen and *behind* it is an enormous projector throwing an image on the screen. On the studio floor is a narrow white line right in line with the projector lens, and the lens of the camera must be right on that white line. That camera is not photographing the screen and what's on it; it is photographing light in certain colors; therefore, the camera lens must be level and in line with the projector lens. Many of the shots on the merry-go-round were low camera setups.(...)The projector had to be put up on a high platform, pointing down, and the screen had to be exactly at right angles to the level-line from the lens. All the shots took nearly half a day to line up, for each setup. We had to change the projector every time the angle changed. (Bogdanovich: 518)

The most impressive shots occur when the carousel breaks; "*that* was a miniature blown up on a big screen and we put live people in front of the screen" (Bogdanovich: 518) (see page 103). Besides the extraordinary and unexpected shots Hitchcock obtained through this technique, the shot of the old man crawling

under the carousel is dramatic (only spoiled by the fact that when he gets up the image is in fast motion.) Hitchcock further comments “I did the most dangerous thing I’ve ever done on that picture and I’ll never, never do it again. When the little man crawled underneath the moving carousel – *that* was actual. If he had raised his head an inch, two inches – finish,” recognising that he took “a dreadful chance” (Bogdanovich: 518). However, the sequence that probably is the most referred to in film history is the shower murder in *Psycho*. For many, this is Hitchcock’s greatest masterpiece, it is considered by some critics as “the most shocking for audiences both then and later” (Spoto: 413), or “perhaps the most terrifying film ever made” (Wood: 142). These are only some among hundreds of attempts to sum up the effect of this unusual film where its leading star, Janet Leigh, playing Marion Crane, is violently murdered in the first third of the film. Therefore, *Psycho* can be divided in two rather different parts: before and after Marion’s death. In the first part the story is centred on Marion Crane; in the second part on Norman Bates.

The film starts with three shots (one of a miniature) of the city of Phoenix. Precise indications are given to the spectator, the name of the city, day and time, in order to establish the nature of the meeting that is about to be witnessed. Hitchcock remarks, “cinema is a visual medium. In *Psycho*, for example, I wanted to express desperation visually. The girl and her lover are desperate” (Bogdanovich: 477). Besides desperation, he also manages to convey a visual impression of solitude. The camera zooms and arbitrarily goes through the window of a motel into the room, as if the spectator was peeping through it. As is usual in Hitchcock’s films, the camera becomes the spectator’s eye. After stealing forty thousand dollars from her boss’s office, Marion gets into her car and runs away to be with her lover, Sam. During her long journey, most of it made in silence, with only the film’s music and her thoughts as company, Marion imagines what people will say and the spectator hears her thoughts. Even if Truffaut argues that “[i]n that whole picture there isn’t a single character with whom a viewer might identify,” and Hitchcock agrees, “It wasn’t necessary” (416, 417), the spectator cannot avoid feeling some kind of identification with Marion. Morrison acknowledges that she is “the focus of our interest and identification. We are engaged in her story. We have

been given her point of view a number of times. We have heard the thoughts in her head" (8). Through the use of alternate shots in Marion's car, Hitchcock gives the spectator a subjective point of view, from Marion's perspective. There are shots of a frame within a frame on several occasions: when she is questioned by the highway patrolman, her window functions as a frame within the bigger frame that is the screen; when she is filmed from the back of the car, the rear window also works as a frame, and finally, when the audience is shown her perspective, the windscreen and the rear view mirror function as a frame within a frame. The last shot I referred to is probably the best and most dramatic car sequence in cinema and particularly interesting in visual terms, since there are two opposite movements: the movement forward of the car, as well as the movement backwards in the rear view. A frame can also be a trap and mirrors, that are multiply filmed (especially in "Mother's" bedroom), create the similar effect of a frame inside a frame. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, mirrors seem to reflect more than what is actually seen, they seem to reflect the soul, feelings and inner thoughts of the characters. Besides being a symbol of a split personality, Spoto points out that "'cutting' imagery" complements it, beginning with "Saul Bass's title designs, which tear and split the names", the "basic geometry of the film" referred to by Hitchcock, which consists of "the bisecting horizontals and verticals," exemplified by "a construction crane that cuts the horizon of Phoenix, by the bed and bedposts of the hotel, by the standing John Gavin and the supine Janet Leigh, and, most of all, by the horizontal motel and the looming, vertical house." There are also "other suggestions of slashing," such as "a telephone pole that 'slices' Leigh's parked car; scythes and rakes suspended over heads in a hardware shop; and the murderer's raised knife" (422).

As I already mentioned, in Hitchcock films the visual details have an extraordinary strength. Hitchcock, a director from the pre-sound era, used all the resources of cinema and he knew how to maximize the images of a film, often with no need for dialogue: just the image speaking for itself, just the film. After Marion's sudden death, Hitchcock, through sheer technique, manages to evoke her memory visually through her sister, Lila, for instance, when Sam returns from his visit to the Motel, "Hitchcock chose to end on a close-up in which her features are

completely in shadow, reminding us for a moment of her dead sister and suggesting that Lila may be the next victim" (Krohn: 224). Some other unusual shots were also included in the picture, such as the unprecedented shot and sound of a toilet being flushed, "the most iconoclastic image in the picture" (Spoto: 420), was a major achievement and "believed to be the first such shot in American cinema history" (Condon; Sangster: 242). Another rather original shot is the one directly under the shower head, obtained during the shower scene: "For a shot right at the water stream, the crew had to block off the inner holes on the shower head so that the water sprayed past the camera lens" (Condon; Sangster: 245).

Bogdanovich comments that Hitchcock considered *Psycho* "technically the most satisfying" (475) of his films and that "he seemed to enjoy the mechanical process by which reality could be created through total illusion" (478). McGilligan acknowledges that Hitchcock told his staff that *Psycho* would be "the ultimate *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*," it would be "gruesome and scary and darkly humorous." Using his television crew and shooting in black and white would keep costs down: "All the filming could be done in the studio – on a quick, TV-style schedule" (579). Hitchcock stated, "I used a complete television unit to shoot it very quickly. The only place where I digressed was when I slowed down the murder scene, the cleaning-up scene, and the other scenes that indicated anything that required time. All of the rest was handled in the same way that they do it in television" (Truffaut: 436).

Unlike what happens in *Strangers on a Train* and in *Rope*, there are two murders in *Psycho*, both sudden and savage: the surprising and quite early murder of Marion in the shower and the not so surprising murder of Arbogast. These are two of the most violent murders in Hitchcock's films, perpetrated through multiple stabbings with a knife, and include suggested blood and a high degree of suggested violence. As is usual and natural in Hitchcock's films, these were the scenes that required the most work, care and technical resources. Hitchcock explained how the shower murder sequence was done: "It took us seven days to shoot that scene, and there were seventy camera setups for forty-five seconds of footage" and he further acknowledged that "We had a torso specially made up for that scene, with the blood that was supposed to spurt away

from the knife, but I didn't use it. I used a live girl instead, a naked model who stood in for Janet Leigh. We only showed Miss Leigh's hands, shoulders, and head. All the rest was the stand-in." The final effect was achieved through slow motion and montage, "[n]aturally, the knife never touched the body; it was all done in the montage. I shot some of it in slow motion so as to cover the breasts. The slow shots were not accelerated later on because they were inserted in the montage so as to give an impression of normal speed" (Truffaut: 427, 429). The effect is "[a]n impression of a knife slashing, as if tearing at the very screen, ripping the film" (Spoto: 419), as is written in the script. Nor was sound neglected: "After testing the sound generated by stabbing a number of different fruits, Hitch selected the sound of a stabbed casaba (a Turkish melon) for the sound effects to be used in the movie. The 'blood' seen in the shower was actually chocolate sauce" (Condon; Sangster: 245).

After Marion's murder, there is a "transition from the bathtub drain to Marion's dead eye, reminiscent of Bass's title sequence for *Vertigo*, to which Hitchcock would add a clockwise camera movement to mirror the spiralling counter-clockwise movement of the bloody water going down the drain" (Krohn: 230). McGilligan comments that "[a]ll of Hitchcock's long experience and magicianship went into these, his most spectacular forty-five seconds of terrifying illusion" (594). Janet Leigh (quoted by McGilligan) acknowledges that "[t]he hardest shot was the last one of Marion, dead, 'starting with the eye in full frame and gradually easing back to disclose the draped body still clutching the torn curtain, the running water, the entire bathroom'" (594). This shot was filmed several times, and in the end a freeze shot was used. After this the camera seems to retreat, focuses on the money for some seconds and then on the window, through which we hear Norman. Hitchcock considers that "[t]his is the most violent scene of the picture. As the film unfolds, there is less violence because the harrowing memory of this initial killing carries over to the suspenseful passages that come later" (Truffaut: 429).

Later on, another murder is committed, also through stabbing, also conveying an extraordinary impression of violence. Hitchcock used a continuous shot of Arbogast going up the stairs, and when he gets to the last step he placed

the camera very high (as he does in the shot of Norman carrying mother to the fruit cellar), therefore concealing the true identity of the murderer. "But the main reason for raising the camera so high was to get the contrast between the long shot and the close-up of the big head as the knife came down at him. It was like music, you see, the high shot with the violins, and suddenly the big head with the brass instruments clashing." Hitchcock further explains that "[i]n the high shot the mother dashes out and I cut into the movement of the knife sweeping down. Then I went over to the close-up on Arbogast" (Truffaut: 423), therefore adding emotion to the scene. Krohn comments that "[a]s in the shower scene, the 'cut' ('Mother's' slashing knife) is represented by a 'cut' (the cut to the close-up of Arbogast)" (231,234). Hitchcock explained the technical details of the scene: "We put a plastic tube on his face with hemoglobin, and as the knife came up to it, we pulled a string releasing the blood on his face down the line we had traced in advance" (Truffaut: 423). Arbogast's fall back on the stairway was done by process. "First I did a separate dolly shot down the stairway, without the man. Then we sat him in a special chair in which he was in a fixed position in front of the transparency screen showing the stairs. Then we shot the chair, and Arbogast simply threw his arms up, waving them as if he'd lost his balance" (Truffaut: 427). This sequence of pure visual fantasy represents a symbolic fall.

Considering *Psycho* his most 'cinematic' film since *The Lodger*, Hitchcock explains that he was thinking "in terms of the style of the picture and the use of the cinema, of the *visual* only." He further adds that "In both, the pattern very clearly was the creation of imagery to set up the audience – establish a mood – and you filled them with so much apprehension and fear at the beginning that as the film went on, boy, we had them working for us," best exemplified by the shower scene: "By showing the shower scene in detail, as the film went on, the manifestation of horror on the screen could diminish. But it increased in the mind of the audience" (Bogdanovich: 532). All Hitchcock claimed to care about were the technical aspects of a film, through which he could reach his audience.

My main satisfaction is that the film had an effect on the audiences, and I consider that very important. I don't care about the subject matter; I don't care about the acting; but I do care about the pieces of film and the photography and the sound track and all of the technical ingredients that made the audience scream. I feel it's tremendously satisfying for us to be

able to use the cinematic art to achieve something of a mass emotion. And with *Psycho* we most definitely achieved this. It wasn't a message that stirred the audiences, nor was it a great performance or their enjoyment of the novel. They were aroused by pure film (Truffaut: 434).

2. Set Design, Properties and Costumes

Rope was, as I mentioned previously, Hitchcock's first colour film. He was "determined to reduce the color to a minimum" (Truffaut: 261). Particular care was taken with the background that is visible through the window of the living room representing the New York skyline. "The film starts in daylight and ends at nightfall; the incremental shadowing of the sky, with stars, lights, and neon signs twinkling on, would coincide with the action" (McGilligan: 411). It is possible to observe the cyclorama and the variations of colour that occur, as time goes by, in the complex set he built (as he did for *Rear Window*, also starring James Stewart.) "Toward the last four or five reels, in other words, by sunset, I realized that the orange in the sun was far too strong, and on account of that we did the last five reels all over again" (Hitchcock quoted by Truffaut: 262). There are many skyscrapers and some separate and mobile clouds made of spun glass that were moved between reels, following the plan Hitchcock had created for them. As the end of the day approaches, the sky gets darker and the lights in the buildings, as well as some neon city-lights are visible. It creates the feeling of living in a city, and, rising from the street, real pre-recorded street noises, such as sirens and people talking in the streets, can be heard. Hitchcock commented that "to get that effect, I made them put the microphone six stories high and I gathered a group of people below on the sidewalk and had them talk about the shots." In relation to the police siren "I made them get an ambulance with a siren. We placed a microphone at the studio gate and sent the ambulance two miles away and that's the way we made the sound track" (Truffaut: 266, 267). The opening of the window represents an act of liberation, since it is the only moment in which the outside world of the big city is allowed into the film, except for the initial shots. In fact, *Rope* starts with a high angle shot of a street. Cars go by, people walk in the street; it could be any street, any town, any other ordinary day. The camera makes a gradual movement backwards, crosses a terrace and focuses on a window with closed curtains.

Rope was filmed in a small, controlled studio, in the confines of a single stage set, composed of living room, hall, dining room and kitchen, representing a penthouse above Manhattan and therefore a whole aestheticized social milieu, a fastidious world which is shaken by the sudden and unexpected presence of murder. In contrast, *Strangers on a Train* and *Psycho* take place in very different settings, cities, houses, closed and opened spaces, but also in a car and on a train. In *Strangers on a Train* the settings are marked mainly by the opposition between light and darkness, creating a chiaroscuro effect. In *Psycho*, the setting of the Bates Motel is particularly interesting, mainly due to the opposition between a vertical block (the house) and a horizontal block (the Motel). The creepy gothic house seems to represent its owner's personality. In *Rope* the walls and the furniture have a central role to play. The walls had wheels so that they could be moved away while the camera moved from one room to the other. "When we went from one room into another, the wall of the hallway or of the living room would swing back on silent rails". The furniture was "mounted on rollers so that we could push it aside as the camera passed" (Hitchcock, quoted by Truffaut: 265). Among the furniture the most important piece is the chest inside which Brandon and Philip have placed David's dead body and from the top of which they eat in a macabre ritual planned by the two murderers. The piano is also another important piece of furniture since it represents both a 'shield,' a form of concealment behind which Philip hides, and also the only art that Philip seems to master.

Rope was named after the object that is used both to kill David Kentley and to tie the books that Brandon gives to David's father, therefore serving two quite different purposes. Also the gun that Brandon has in his pocket serves two purposes: firstly it is used to hurt someone, secondly it is used to fire out of the window, as a public alarm. In *Strangers on a Train* the monogrammed cigarette lighter with the crossed tennis racquets performs a very important function in the story, not only as a symbol of Guy and Ann's love, but also as the object that is used by Bruno in order to blackmail Guy, therefore it is also a link between them. Its flame symbolizes life, as well as its loss (death), extinguishable just as life is. Bruno flicks on the lighter when he talks to Miriam and, as soon as he turns it off, he strangles her. It is, along with the carousel music and Barbara's glasses

(similar to those that Miriam wore, and Bruno uses as a proof of her death), the cause of Bruno's collapse at the party. It is also the object that may incriminate Guy and send him to prison. In the end, the twisted conspiracy is exposed when Bruno's clenched hand opens, after his death, and reveals the lighter. In *Psycho*, money starts by being the motivation for the protagonist's behaviour but it abruptly becomes a trivial matter. In the second part of the story, stuffed birds, the car consigned to the swamp, mirrors, "Mother's" knife and costumes become the most telling objects. Indeed, Hitchcock always took particular care with the wardrobe in his films. Brandon and Philip are two well-dressed young men, both wearing dark suits. Their guests are also wealthy and well-dressed people. The same applies to *Strangers on a Train* with Guy and Bruno - the latter representing something of the dandy, as do Brandon and Philip. These are not only well-dressed men but they possess some of the vanity of the artist, with their own set of aesthetic rules and values. In *Psycho*, apart from the "Mother" costume which has a very specific function, Marion's underwear has a symbolic meaning: her white underwear symbolizes the good girl, the girl before the theft, whereas the black underwear represents the bad girl, the girl after the robbery, as was referred to in the second chapter, 'Hitchcock: Doubtful Morality.' But as underwear is a more sexually loaded signifier than other garments, it is clear that Hitchcock's visuals are meant to carry a greater level of disapproval.

3. The Murder and the Murderer; the Art and the Artist: Dialogue, Humour and Gesture.

Alfred Hitchcock put much effort into the murder scenes, often giving his murderers the leading dynamic role, and relegating his other characters to a passive more responding role, specifically the nominal hero (although in the end he always had to 'submit' to the social conventions that dictate that good must be rewarded and evil must be punished). Through their aestheticized, sharp and intelligent dialogue, humour, posture and gesture, Hitchcock villains almost always manage to captivate audiences and set in motion an ambiguous confounding moral and aesthetic issues.

Rope starts with an extremely abrupt and unprefaced act, even though the man, who is later learnt to be David Kentley, is murdered gently, almost delicately, not in a violent way like Marion Crane in *Psycho*. There is no blood and no noise besides the scream lost among the noises of the city. In fact, in the whole film there is not a single act of physical violence apart from this short strangulation scene. After the murder, Brandon and Philip put David's body in the chest that is in the middle of the living room, where it stays for the remainder of the film and only the murderers and the audience are aware of this fact. The two murderers prove to be even more cold-blooded when they hold a party for the family and friends of the young man they have just murdered, "It's not just the inspired finishing touch to our work. It's more. It's the signature of the artists" (Brandon). Wood agrees: "The murder (...) lacked the essential component that gives works of art (...) their meaning," which is an audience even if they are "frustratingly unable to appreciate the full artistry" since they do not know all the facts (354-355). David's body stays in the middle of the living room during the party, inside the unlocked chest. Brandon's distorted mind adds another detail to the party: food will be served from the chest, "Making our work of art a masterpiece." Later, Brandon explains, "Don't want to leave our guest of honor alone during supper" and he even comments ironically "I think they [the candelabras] suggest a ... a ceremonial altar, which you can heap with the foods for our sacrificial feast." In fact, this ceremonial altar suggests not only a religious sacrifice and ritual but also some New York intellectuals' refinement of the savage rites of cannibalism.

The final touch is given by the fact that Brandon invited Rupert Cadell, the boys' former teacher, to the party. Rupert was the man who inspired Brandon and Philip with his theories on the art of murder (Brandon comments "He thinks murder is a crime for most men but..." and Philip concludes "A privilege for the few") as well as his "impatience with social conventions." James Stewart's character is characterized by a limp, which is explained by Mrs. Wilson, the maid, "Rupert has got his bad leg in the war for his courage." This comment contrasts with Brandon's remark "Good Americans usually die young on the battlefield." Since this film was made shortly after the first atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, on the 6th August 1945, at the end of World War II, killing 130 000 people, these references

to the war, far from being accidental, simultaneously contextualize the action of the film and make a statement. Sometimes murder can be a sanctioned act and also a technical achievement.

Rupert was their master and the one man most likely to suspect, according to Philip. Although Brandon thinks “He’s the one man who might appreciate this from our angle, the artistic one,” he also acknowledges that Rupert would never commit such an act, “He hasn’t the nerve. Oh, intellectually, he could’ve come along. He’s brilliant. But he’s a little too fastidious. He could’ve invented and admired but he never could have acted. That’s where we’re superior. We have courage. Rupert doesn’t.”

Being a film confined to a single set, in *Rope* dialogues and gesture have a crucial function. The dialogues between the characters are sharp, quick and witty, aestheticized through their eloquence and humour, making inherently nasty material become a matter for reflection and also fun. In fact, humour is used to explore these callous speculations and dark dealings and aestheticize them, making them more acceptable. During the party the characters offer some commentaries on murder that function ironically since only the audience and the two murderers can fully understand or appreciate them: “Knock’em dead,” “I could strangle you”, “These hands will bring you great fame” and “You’ve been playing a foul trick”. Throughout the party, in an ironic way, Rupert proclaims murder, not ordinary murder, but murder as social engineering, as a way of solving social problems (“think of the problems it would solve – unemployment, poverty, standing in line for theatre tickets”) and murder as an art: “After all, murder is, or should be, an art. Not one of the seven lively perhaps, but an art nevertheless. And as such, the privilege of committing it should be reserved for those who are really superior individuals” and Brandon completes enthusiastically, “And the victims – inferior beings whose lives are unimportant anyway.” Brandon and Philip cannot see the irony in their mentor’s words and in their distorted minds they take his words literally, proclaiming their agreement with Nietzsche and his theory of the superman but condemning Hitler, ‘a paranoid savage,’ whose supermen were ‘brainless murderers,’ ‘stupid,’ ‘incompetents and fools.’ To Brandon and Philip, what people call “civilisation is hypocrisy.” They do not understand violence in the

execution of some wider social programme – only as the assertion of a putatively superior or self-consciously artistic ‘self’.

Not corresponding to the stereotype of murderers, the audience will be invited to question Brandon and Philip’s motivation to commit such a heinous act. Soon the audience realises that although they were intimate with the victim, it appears that it is a completely arbitrary murder, there was no motivation at all, besides the thrill of it: “It was perfect (...) An immaculate murder! We’ve killed for the sake of danger and for the sake of killing.” In fact, they see the crime as little more than an experiment: “That’s the difference between us and the ordinary man. They talk about committing the perfect crime but nobody does it. Nobody commits a murder just for ... the experiment of committing it. Nobody except us” (Brandon). Through their dialogues the audience understands that the two murderers think that murder ‘is’ or ‘can be’ a work of art and praise the artistic beauty of murder, comparing it with the power to create, “You know I never did anything unless I did it perfectly. I’ve always wished for more artistic talent. Well, murder can be an art too. The power to kill can be just as satisfying as the power to create” (Brandon), and this is only possible for those who are superior, who are above the law. Rules were created for ordinary human beings, superior beings do not need them. In fact, the two murderers are very far from geniuses, and the murder is no masterpiece, although it is a kind of a show. Ultimately it is a cheap work of art because they are too interested in applause to commit the perfect crime. They are seeking proof of their superiority as well as the approval of their mentor. Both desires are fatal for them.

In fact Rupert seems to be the only one in the party to notice, or at least to ask, why they are eating from a chest (except for Mrs. Wilson, the maid, who wonders why they set the table on the chest), and he recalls: “One was always turning up in the bedtime stories he told in prep school.” The chest appears associated both with Brandon’s imaginary since his childhood and with frightening stories, which seems to be a symptom of some childhood lack or trauma. Brandon and Philip’s behaviour, together with David’s delayed arrival also raise some suspicions in Rupert, especially after Brandon and Philip’s fight over the veracity of a story that involved Philip’s former job of strangling chickens. Once again Philip’s

use of his hands is mentioned and again it is possible to conclude that his experiences in strangling were doomed to failure. As I said, the only art that Philip seems to master is music.

When the guests leave the party, Rupert finds the proof he needs of David's presence in the apartment: his hat. It was the fatal mistake in the two artists' so-called masterpiece, the mistake that would finally ruin their work of art, since Rupert has the confirmation of his suspicions. Later on he finds an excuse to come back to the apartment and in a 'cat and mouse' game, Brandon defies Rupert to imagine how he would commit the perfect murder. Rupert eventually opens the chest and is horrified, not only with what he sees but mainly with the fact that his lectures had been so distorted and misunderstood, "You've given my words a meaning that I never dreamed of. And you've tried to twist them into a cold logical excuse for your ugly murder. Well, they never were that, Brandon, you can't make them that." Now it is Brandon's turn to be horrified to discover that their mentor does not consider their deed a work of art, a masterpiece, but an 'ugly murder' (still allowing for the possibility that there are 'beautiful murders'), therefore not sharing their aesthetic principles nor their aspirations to commit the perfect murder, the perfect work of art.

The only murderer in *Strangers on a Train* also believes that it is possible to commit a perfect murder. Bruno Anthony exclaims "Oh, I certainly admire people who do things. People who do things are important. Oh, me, I don't seem to do anything" and later on he contradicts himself through the statement "Well, I want to do something. Everything. You know, I've got a theory that you should do everything before you die. Have you ever driven a car blind-folded at 150 miles an hour? I did. I flew a jet plane too. Man, that's a thrill. And I'm going to make a reservation on the first rocket to the moon." Like the two murderers in *Rope*, Bruno wants to do things for the thrill of it, in order to prove that it is possible to do them, and that he is in some sense adequate, because it is clear he does not have the approval of his father. In this case, Bruno's perfect idea consists of exchanging murders. Although Guy Haines does not take him seriously, in his distorted mind Bruno believes they have an agreement and fulfils his side of the bargain, demanding that Guy does the same.

As in *Rope*, the murder in *Strangers on a Train* is not a violent murder, it is done quite gently, noiselessly (every slight noise in any case is disguised by the music of the carousel) and bloodlessly, as a perfect murder should be. The victim is also strangled, as in *Rope*, but this time the murderer does not use any kind of 'tool,' except his own hands, 'the best tools,' as he later acknowledges in his conversation with Mrs Cunningham and Mrs Anderson, "I have the best way. And the best tools. Simple, silent and quick. The silent part being the most important." And he almost commits a second murder, nearly strangling Mrs Cunningham while focusing on Barbara. The murder is not a particularly violent scene, it is done gently and the murderer lets her body fall to the ground quite carefully ("It was very quick Guy. She wasn't hurt in any way. I was all over in no time".) The victim does not scream, nor struggle much, due to Bruno's strength, already demonstrated in the strength contest, and probably because she was caught by surprise. Furthermore, there is no connection at all between the murderer and the murdered person, consequently, no motive. Almost the perfect crime, except for the reneging on an agreement that one of the parts had not agreed to, or even acknowledged he had considered it. All Hitchcock's "artistry comes together in a single moment of the film, in the one shot that reveals Hitchcock's greatest care and originality: the murder scene" (Spoto: 330). The murder sequence displays stunning visual effects: it was "photographed in a concave mirror, and then printed into the lenses of the girl's glasses frames" (McGilligan: 452). In what Spoto considers "one of the most unexpected, most aesthetically justified moments in film, the camera observes the strangling and the final collapse of the woman as a huge reflection in one of the eyeglass lenses, the shadowy distortion marking at once something gruesome and infernal, a moment wrenched from a terrible nightmare" (330). McGilligan further states that "It was the kind of shot Hitchcock had been tinkering with for twenty years – and Robert Burks captured it magnificently. In the end, *Strangers on a Train's* single Oscar nomination went to its director of photography" (452). Moreover, McGilligan acknowledges that "Hitchcock put as much effort and planning into that single shot as some directors put into entire films, and how it was done serves as a paradigm of his genius" (451). Both in *Strangers on a Train*

and in *Psycho*, Hitchcock put extraordinary care into the murder scenes, which he knew were pivotal to the meaning of his work.

Hitchcock wanted the whole film to live up to his visual requirements and he points out the flaws of *Strangers on a Train* from his point of view: “the ineffectiveness of the two main actors and the weakness of the final script. If the writing of the dialogue had been better, we’d have had stronger characterizations. The great problem with this type of picture (...) is that your main characters sometimes tend to become mere figures” (Truffaut: 290). Hitchcock was often disparaging about his actors but he has less reason for being so in this film than in many others. McGilligan’s comment seems fairer, “*Strangers on a Train* would be a film of stunning visual effects. Yet like other great Hitchcock films, it contained layers of subtle meaning at every level, from the script and the imagery to the actors themselves” (452).

In this film particular importance is given to ‘criss-cross’, as I already mentioned (see pages 27 and 63), through double meanings and references, dialogues and also visually. Bruno refers to ‘criss-cross’ on several occasions, namely when he exposes to Guy his idea of a perfect murder, which consists of exchanging murders, that is, ‘criss-cross’, idea that he repeats when alone, looking at Guy’s lighter. Also, through the film there are several references to ‘being double crossed,’ for instance, Guy refers to Miriam as “You little double crosser” and later on, over the telephone, Bruno concludes, “Oh, so she double crossed you!” When Bruno finds out that Guy is not going to kill his father, as he had supposedly agreed to do, he exclaims, “I don’t like to be double crossed.” The characters see their lives crossed by other people, with whom they have no relation at all, while the world of chaos also interpenetrates and collides with the world of order, as I said in the chapter ‘Hitchcock: Doubtful Morality’ (see page 40). Moreover, three characters, Miriam (who wears glasses, works at a record shop, and visits the fairground, with its great wheel and its carousel), Guy (associated with the fairground carousel) and Bruno (associated with the burst balloon, the fairground carousel and the glasses), are associated with broken circles, which Spoto identifies as “images of order disrupted, harmony destroyed” (329).

The fairground symbolizes Miriam's world, a world of disorder and chaos, a world of fun and futility. "The fairground and amusement park is a symbolic projection of Miriam's world: a world of disorder, of the pursuit of fun and cheap glamor as the aim of life, of futility represented by the circular motion of roundabout and Great Wheel that receive such strong visual emphasis in almost every shot" (Wood: 88). This world of hers is at the other extreme of the world to which Guy aspires, a world of light and order. "The whole sequence is realized with a marvelous particularity and complexity. Through Miriam, Hitchcock evokes a whole social milieu, small town life in all its unimaginativeness and restriction" (88-89). While Bruno is stalking Miriam, from her house (he waits outside, in the dark) and into the fairground, the audience watches, mainly from Bruno's viewpoint, Miriam's overt flirtation with him, through a series of shots that are intended not only to define the world from which Guy wants to escape, but mainly to make the audience feel identified with Bruno at the time of the murder. Maxford considers that "The fairground sequence is particularly well handled, with Miriam clearly giving Bruno the come on, while he remains coolly steadfast in his pursuit of her, ignoring all distractions, among them a young boy dressed as a cowboy. 'Bang, bang, you're dead,' squeals the kid, at which Bruno nonchalantly bursts the child's balloon with his cigarette" (246).

In *Psycho*, where Hitchcock achieves an even higher level aesthetically, in the murder scene in the shower, the water has a symbolic meaning, representing purification, the washing away of all her sins and guilt, and the possibility of a new beginning. Ironically, it is the beginning of the end. Condon and Sangster agree by adding that "The shower was a baptism, a taking away of the torment from her mind. Marion became a virgin again. [Hitchcock] wanted the audience to feel her peacefulness, her kind of rebirth, so that the moment of intrusion is even more shocking and tragic" (245) (see page 51).

The murderer Norman Bates has a very strange hobby, taxidermy, the art of preserving the skins of dead animals, in this case birds (and his mother as well), filling them with a special material, usually sawdust, so that they look as though they are alive. Moreover, taxidermy is also a process through which bodily form is preserved, at least apparently. "I really don't know anything about birds. My hobby

is stuffing things – you know, taxidermy. And I guess I'd just rather stuff birds because I hate the look of beasts when they're stuffed...I think only birds look well stuffed because – well, because they're kind of passive to begin with.” Immersed in the ornithological, throughout the film there are many symbolic references to birds: the film begins in Phoenix, Marion and Lila's surname is Crane, there are many stuffed birds, as well as pictures representing birds on the walls of the Motel. In the parlour of the Motel, during Norman and Marion's dialogue, due to the visual disposition of the stuffed birds, Norman's posture and the angle of the camera, Norman seems to assume, at different moments during his speech, the position of both bird of prey and prey, which in fact he is, being caught in a trap of his own making, and from which he cannot escape. Norman says that Marion eats 'like a bird,' and, when he 'discovers' Marion's corpse in the bathroom, he accidentally knocks over one of the bird pictures. Hitchcock gives an example of other connotations: the owl, a bird that belongs to the night world and is a watcher, and he further adds that Norman knows the birds and knows that they're watching him with their knowing eyes reflecting his guilt (Truffaut: 434) (see page 51). Norman also watches Marion disrobe, peeping through a hole concealed by a painting of 'Susanna and the elders', an “artistic representation of voyeurism” (Spoto: 424) (see page 36). However, the spectator not only watches Norman watching, the camera turns around and the spectator watches along with him, almost becoming Norman. Furthermore, Lila's exploration of the house symbolizes the exploration of Norman's personality. In the end, the final sequence of the film is amongst the most striking. The audience watches Norman and hears his thoughts, concluding that Mother's personality is predominant, and for a second it is possible to see Mother's skull superimposed over Norman's features.

Hitchcock seems to have had a particular attraction toward villains since most of the villains in his films are attractive, good-looking, charming and pleasing people, the kind of people we generally tend to associate with 'good behaviour'. Unfortunately people are not always what they seem to be and in Hitchcock's films villains are usually more attractive and charming than the supposed 'heroes'. “The better the villain, the better the picture” comments Truffaut (279). Consequently, villains often have more lines or a greater amount of screen time. In *Rope*,

Brandon, another link in the chain of fascinating, attractive and charming Hitchcock villains (see page 31), manipulates everyone around him, except Rupert Cadell, another attractive character who may be considered a villain, at least morally, since it was he who first generated the ideas that are the inspiration for the murder. These two characters (Brandon and Rupert) dominate most of the scenes in the film and the narrative seems to develop around them.

In the film *Strangers on a Train*, Bruno is a very charming villain (even if it is an effeminate charm), who tries to manipulate people in order to obtain what he wants. He tries to manipulate Guy, Ann and his own mother. Guy can also be considered dubious, someone whose values and objectives are highly questionable. Truffaut comments “Robert Walker gives a rather poetic portrayal; he’s undoubtedly more attractive” (290). Maxford, among others, agrees and adds “everyone pales besides Robert Walker’s masterful work as the charmingly psychotic Bruno” (247). Although in Patricia Highsmith’s novel “Bruno is a physically repugnant alcoholic”, Hitchcock imagined him “as more of a Hitchcockian killer – dapper and charming, at least on the surface” (McGilligan: 442). On several occasions in the film, Bruno seems to mutate into some monstrous being, namely in the tunnel of love, where his shadow seems to grow bigger and bigger, and also when he murders Miriam.

The two main characters in *Psycho*, Marion and Norman, are two good-looking characters that dominate the film completely, and eclipse the others. Both of them may be considered villains, since they both committed crimes, although crimes of a very different nature. The spectator cannot avoid identification although aware of their wrong deeds. Hitchcock comments that “When Perkins is looking at the car sinking in the pond, even though he’s burying a body, when the car stops sinking for a moment, the public is thinking, ‘I hope it goes all the way down!’ It’s a natural instinct” (Truffaut: 420, 421).

Some of the characters in Hitchcock’s films establish a power relationship that is also an aesthetic one with the other characters, and even with the audience, charming and captivating everyone. In *Rope*, Brandon has clearly a power relationship with Philip, who sometimes momentarily rebels but who always ends up accepting Brandon’s decisions and actions, even confessing “You frighten

me". Philip seems to be weaker, more nervous and unable to show any independence. On the other hand, Rupert Cadell has power over both of them, since they consider him their mentor. In *Strangers on a Train*, Bruno, through blackmail, tries to obtain some power over Guy and lead him into committing his crime. He has some power over him, but Guy eventually fortuitously manages to evade his influence. In *Psycho*, Norman is dominated by his mother's personality, which is stronger. Norman seems to have some unconscious power over Marion's decisions, since after their conversation in the Motel's parlour she eventually repents the fact that she stole money from her boss and is taking a wrong path in life, and decides to go back to Phoenix and find a way to correct her errors.

All the murderers in these films conscious or unconsciously believe they are justified in taking life with their own hands and who do so with some aesthetic aplomb. By any conventional notion of sanity, they would all be considered mad. Another characteristic common to most Hitchcock's villains is the irony and humour they display in their lines, especially Brandon and Rupert but also Bruno. In *Rope*, Janet even refers to Brandon's 'warped sense of humour' when she realises that Brandon has invited her, David (her boyfriend) and Kenneth (her former boyfriend), to the party. Other characters like Barbara Morton in *Strangers on a Train*, or Mrs Atwater in *Rope*, also introduce comedy through their conversation, as well as through the reading of Philip's hands. The comedy associated with these minor figures is broader, more caricatural however.

4. Music

According to Jean Douchet,

La musique, accord harmonieux de tous éléments, symbolise chez Hitchcock la beauté sublime du Plan divin et de son déroulement. Quand un criminel joue d'un instrument c'est qu'il cherche à détruire le Plan de l'intérieur, ou bien qu'il essaie de s'en emparer au profit des Ténèbres

and he gives some examples, such as the murderer in *Young and Innocent*, Farley Granger in *Rope* and the murderer in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (23). The hands are instruments of expression and of destruction. The same hands that play the piano have strangled a person some hours before. Music has an important and

appropriate aesthetic contribution to make. Music is the element that links some separate parts of *Strangers on a Train*. The song 'The Band Played On' which Miriam, the two boys that accompany her, and also Bruno, sing while riding in the carousel (Krohn comments that "The shot in question is held the longest, until Bruno stops singing and just looks at his prey" [123]) is the same music that can be heard while Bruno is strangling her, and later on, when Bruno sees Barbara at the Morton's party and he seems to relive the murder, he hears the same music in his head, goes into a kind of trance, and almost kills Mrs. Cunningham. In the final sequence of the carousel, that same music can be heard again. Krohn acknowledges that "Bruno is the Monster from the Id," therefore "it is appropriate that composer Dimitri Tiomkin (...) underscores the eerier moments of his pursuit of Guy with string motifs" (117). When Bruno's mother shows him her painting of Saint Francis, Bruno immediately identifies it with his father. The grotesque image seems to have a claw instead of his right hand. This shot is accompanied by "a discordant, otherworldly music cue by Tiomkin" (Krohn: 119).

In *Psycho*, Hitchcock intended to film the shower sequence without any musical background, but as soon as he heard Herrman's piercing music, he changed his mind. Harris and Lasky acknowledge that "The music by Bernard Herrmann played a huge part in terrifying the audience. The composer thought that he should complement the black-and-white film and black-and-white story with black-and-white sound." They further comment that "The piercing and shrieking violin strings abetted Hitchcock's remarkably timed shower scene and magnified the tension throughout the rest of the film" (220). Condon and Sangster consider that "*Psycho's* music is so powerful it has become an automatic signifier throughout popular culture, and arguably is one of only two film soundtracks – the other being John Williams' shark theme for *Jaws* (1976) – that *everybody* knows" (243). In the end of the scene, "[t]he final shot of her lifeless eye is complemented only by the natural noises of running water and a drain gurgling" (McGilligan: 597). Music (or the absence of it) has the power to amplify or condition people's reactions, their feelings and emotions.

5. Doubles

Among his films visual peculiarities, the most original one consists of Hitchcock's cameos (he started doing them in *The Lodger*), a kind of visual joke that became his visual signature. In *Rope*, he has a double cameo, walking in the street, under the credits and there is also his silhouette in neon lights. In *Strangers on a Train*, he appears entering the train carrying a double-bass. In *Psycho*, he appears outside Marion's work place. In the three films the theme of the double is also present, intending, as I mentioned in the chapter 'Hitchcock: Doubtful Morality' (see page 28), to symbolize the different and often conflicting personalities that exist inside each of us. In *Rope*, Philip and Brandon seem to be the doubles of each other, while Rupert is also an antagonist double of Brandon. Kenneth seems to be David's double, since they have some physical resemblances. Even Hitchcock's cameo is doubled, as I referred to previously. In *Strangers on a Train*, Guy and Bruno are undoubtedly the double of each other, beginning with the shots of their feet and the railways that crisscross, the double drinks that Bruno orders, as well as the crosscutting of words, gestures and even dark desires. They seem to be a single personality split in two, like in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Bruno seems to be the picture while Guy is Dorian Gray, separating the moral side from the aesthetic one. Both Brandon and Philip seem to be Dorian Gray's portrait, since their debonair appearances conceal their ruthlessness.

Barbara is Miriam's double, due to their physical similarity and particularly to the glasses they both wear. Bruno's mother is doubled in Mrs. Cunningham (both trivial and silly women), just as his judgmental father is doubled in Senator Morton (both respectable and wealthy men). Spoto adds that the whole film is built around the number 'two' (327-328) (see page 28). Hitchcock appears, as I referred to before, carrying a double-bass (quite appropriately, it is his double visually). In *Psycho*, Norman superficially seems to be Sam's double, at least physically, and the same applies to Marion and Lila who also have a sisterly physical resemblance. It is also possible to establish doubles in-between the three films, besides the murderer or murderers. In both *Rope* and *Strangers on a Train*, there

are two men, who have an awkward relationship; there are older men who represent the voice of morality (Mr. Kentley and Senator Morton respectively), and there are characters that have the function of giving some comic relief to the story (Mrs. Atwater and Barbara respectively). In both *Psycho* and *Strangers on a Train*, there are mothers who are not completely sane (if one accepts that there is a mother in *Psycho*). In *Psycho* even the act of murder itself is doubled, since there are not one but two murders.

6. Shadows

Nightfall, or at least the darkness that masks everything, is the murderer's favourite atmosphere. In *Rope*, although the murder is committed in daytime, it is committed in the seclusion of the apartment, behind closed curtains. Brandon even regrets "Pity we couldn't have done it with the curtains open in the bright sunlight. Well...we can't have everything, can we? We did do it in daytime." There is a kind of cycle in the action, since when the murder is discovered it is already night, and consequently dark. McGilligan comments that "He [Hitchcock] set about planning light and hues – inside and outside the apartment – that would gradually darken to build the tension" (411).

In *Strangers on a Train*, a black and white film, Hitchcock achieves amazing effects through a monochromatic palette. Bruno is, significantly enough, a character whose face is constantly crossed by shadows, by bars, symbolizing that he is a character of the shadows, of the dark, and consequently, a demonic character. From the beginning of Guy and Bruno's conversation on the train, through the cross-cutting between them, we can see that the shadows of the blinds cross Bruno's face like the shadow of bars. Later on, when Guy approaches him outside his house, the feeling is that Guy is leaving light and going into a darker world. Bruno, a shadow among shadows, waits for him behind some bars and pulls Guy to his side. Now, both Bruno and Guy have shadows of bars on their faces. After Guy learns that Bruno has killed Miriam, he wants to call the police but Bruno holds him and, again, Guy is on the other side of the bars, in the open, while Bruno is behind the bars, which throw shadows on his face. When a police

car approaches his house, Guy voluntarily steps behind the bars, from where he, Bruno and also the audience watch, from the shadow. Guy comments, "You've got me acting like a criminal, you crazy fool." But if the criminal in the story is Bruno, the shadows tell us that Guy is also partly drawn into and is a sharer of his darkness.

It is in the dark of the night that Bruno follows and kills Miriam, and it is also concealed by night and shadows that he tries to go back to the island where he killed her, in order to leave Guy's lighter there ("Didn't Bruno say I wanted him to go there one night at the dark? He's not gonna expose himself in broad daylight. That's what's in his mind now"), in this way incriminating Guy. However, this second time around he is not as successful as on the night of the murder. Bruno's journey to Metcalf and to the fair is alternated with tennis sequences, full of light and whiteness. While in the first tennis match of the film, Bruno was the distorting note, all the heads turning to follow the ball, except his, immobile, looking at Guy. In the second match the crowd displays uniformity and tranquillity. In reality, the long shots of the tennis matches were filmed in Forest Hills, during the Davis Cup tournament.

The tension created by the cross-cutting between Bruno's journey and Guy's game reaches a climax when Bruno drops Guy's lighter in a dark and filthy grate. The two men live similar moments of desperation although in totally different situations since while Bruno despairs over the facts that he lost the lighter and that it takes a long time to get dark ("What time does it get dark around here?"), Guy despairs because he has to finish the game quickly, and it is getting dark. Meanwhile, the spectator cannot help wishing they both succeed in their objectives. In the queue to the island, Bruno gets worried about the light, tries to cover his face with his hat, but eventually he has to come into the light. As soon as he does so, the boatman recognises him and warns the police. Bruno realizes that, and tries to disappear again among the shadows, but Guy arrives in time, and after the final sequence on the carousel, the action comes to an end. As in *Rope*, the cycle has finished and everything is discovered when it is once again night.

Most of Bruno's appearances, while he is trying to get Guy to fulfil their supposed agreement, are filmed in contrast with something white, or at least

something illuminated. When he telephones Guy it is possible to see in the background the white and well-illuminated Capitol, while in the foreground Bruno stays amidst the shadows. Wood acknowledges that "in Hitchcock's films, politics, government, democratic symbolism (the Statue of Liberty in *Saboteur*, the Capitol in this film, Mount Rushmore in *North by Northwest*), are always associated with the idea of an ordered life, set against potential chaos" (86). The same type of symbolism is used when Guy and Hennessy walk in front of the Jefferson Memorial and Guy notices a shadowy figure standing on the white stairs, a dark spot in the pureness and whiteness of the image. Also at the Gallery, Bruno makes his appearance with some dark columns as a background ("You're spoiling everything by making me come out into the open") while Guy and Ann have a white background. Furthermore, when Ann leaves the party and looks for Guy, who has escorted Bruno to his car, she leaves the illuminated porch and meets Guy in the dark parking lot outside. There, he finally reveals to her his dark secret. When Guy makes his 'visit' to Mr. Anthony's house, he is filmed in successive shots, moving through the shadows and darkness, apparently in order to do what Bruno wants him to do, murder his father. There are some shots that are completely black, except for a white spot, corresponding to the light from Guy's torch, following the map Bruno gave him. In the bedroom, Guy tries to warn Mr. Anthony against his son, but the dark figure that turns on the light reveals itself as Bruno.

Moreover, Barbara, when talking with Guy at the tennis match where Bruno makes his appearance, refers to Hennessy as 'your shadow.' When Bruno follows Miriam, and the two boys that accompany her, through the Tunnel of Love, it is only possible to see their shadows. Douchet comments, "Projection de la matière, elle n'en conserve que la forme mais en exprime la force maléfique latente. Pure, son action n'en est que plus efficace" (226). There is a shot in which Bruno's shadow seems to grow bigger and to attack Miriam's, therefore creating expectations and suspense, as well as in the following shot of the exit of the tunnel, when before anything is seen a scream is heard. Nothing happened, though, in the tunnel, but it prefigures the events on the darkened island.

The darkness and light symbolism is also present in *Psycho*, where, after driving for a long time through the dark rain at night, and having an uncomfortable meeting with a sinister highway patrolman wearing eerie dark glasses, Marion decides to find a place to spend the night. She stops at the Bates Motel, which is overshadowed by an old house with many of the features of a spooky house from horror cinema. There, she will eventually be murdered by a 'shadow' during the night. Protected by the shadows and the darkness of the night, Norman Bates, after cleaning the bathroom, restoring it to its original whiteness and apparent pureness, therefore concealing the murder, places Marion's corpse in her car and pushes it into a swamp where it is swollen by the dark mud. Murder is concealed both by the darkness of the mud as well as the darkness of the night. It is later stated that Arbogast's murder was concealed in a similar way.

It is in the dark fruit cellar that Lila, Marion's sister, finds Mrs. Bates's corpse. Terrified, she makes a movement with her arm, making the light swing, hence creating 'moving shadows' that precede Norman's appearance, dressed as "Mother," the 'shadow' that attacked and killed Marion and Arbogast. Sam manages to dominate Norman and, as in *Rope* and *Strangers on a Train*, the dark is brought into the light.

Norman Bates, who apparently cannot harm a fly, reveals himself as a pitiless murderer who has committed a number of heinous murders in the middle of the night, including that of his mother and her admirer. The psychiatrist also seems to be bringing things into the light at the end but the very ambiguity of Hitchcock's images suggests that not everything can be illuminated in the final reel. Some well-springs of human motivation remain in the darkness, from whence they can erupt again.

7. Concealment

All the major characters in the three films seem to have their own method of concealment. In *Rope* Brandon hides himself not only in his penthouse, behind closed curtains, but especially behind his intelligent and ironic talk, while his partner, Philip prefers to hide himself behind his piano and his music and his

implied sensitivity. Rupert is the ideal counterpart for Brandon due to his intelligent and playful argumentation. Scriptwriter Arthur Laurents considers that “He [James Stewart] does dominate the picture, though, with ease and authority. His Rupert is intelligent, attractive, laced with humour – teasing, though, rather than sardonic” (McGilligan: 413). In *Strangers on a Train* Bruno is another of Hitchcock’s eloquent murderers, quite the opposite from the hero, Guy. Another form of concealment is achieved by Brandon, Rupert and Bruno, who seem to ‘hide’ themselves behind their cigarettes and the act of smoking, which functions as a kind of a shield. In *Psycho*, Norman, the childlike villain, trapped between silence and intense ‘conversations’ with “Mother,” reveals something of his inner being during the dialogue with Marion in the parlour of the Motel. Through their dialogue Norman seems to escape some of the silence in which he is enveloped and make a real connection with Marion.

There is also another concealment in *Psycho*; Hitchcock deliberately conceals the true identity of the murderer, through the trickery of high angles of the camera (for instance, when Arbogast is murdered and when Norman carries his mother down to the fruit cellar, in a spiralling movement that mirrors the movement of the camera when it follows the blood spiralling down into the drain), unfocused or shadowy images (for instance, when Marion is murdered), and also through a convincing enough story of a man dominated by his mother, thus making “the art of cinema a completely complicit element in the telling of the story” (Maxford: 199). So, the audience hardly suspects the true identity of the murderer and of the sordid and grotesque story that lies beneath it.

Spoto asserts that “In the oddly appealing visual originality there is a stark fusion of the grotesque and the beautiful, a merger celebrated in aesthetic theory by Baudelaire, Joyce, Cocteau, and others.” Furthermore, “[t]he aestheticizing of the horror somehow enables the audience to contemplate more fully its reality; instead of turning away from Hitchcock’s image, repulsed, the viewer gazes, and so is forced to assess feelings, reactions, and moral judgments about the acts themselves.” In Hitchcock’s films murders are not simply outrageous and condemnable acts, since Hitchcock turns these acts into a work of art, aestheticizing them, making them something that is worthy of appreciation.

“Hitchcock saw something beautiful, something desirable in the act of murder itself – something of wishful dream as much as dreaded nightmare” (331).

Alfred Hitchcock was undoubtedly fascinated by murder, by planning and filming this heinous act, by the challenge of trying to provoke extreme reactions in his audience. Making the best use of close-ups and long shots, as well as of reverse angles and cross-cuttings, he managed to involve the audience in the lives and problems of his shady characters, but also in the mechanics of film itself. He simply wanted the audience to be “aroused by pure film” (Truffaut: 434), which he enjoys a reputation for managing to do as no one else has been able to.

Chapter IV

Hitchcock's Film Narrative Technique and the Murder Story

“[N]arrative is a way of organizing spatial and temporal data into a cause-effect chain of events with a beginning, middle, and end that embodies a judgement about the nature of the events.”

Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, p.3, quoted by Warren Buckland in *Film Studies*, p.27

According to Warren Buckland “[t]he concept of ‘narrative’ refers to what happens or what is depicted in films,” that is, it “refers to actions, events and characters.” Furthermore he adds that “A narrative does not consist of a random series of events, but a series of events related to one another in terms of cause and effect” (27). But a narrative is not simply a series of events casually linked together, motivated by characters; narratives should be structured in some formal way. At its simplest this is the division into three stages: a beginning, middle and an end. Buckland acknowledges that “The narrative theorist Tzvetan Todorov also describes narratives in terms of three stages: a state of equilibrium; the disruption of this equilibrium by an event; the successful attempt to restore the equilibrium” (31). The narrative has a circular structure: a state is introduced and disrupted, the narrative tries to restore the initial state of affairs, which is achieved at the end. However, the state of equilibrium is not exactly the same as the one in the beginning; there has been a transformation of some kind brought about by the narrative.

Since murder is shown on screen in all three films, *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train* and *Psycho*, it is natural that the three narratives centre on these moments of criminal intensity and follow on from their consequences. Moreover, in two of the films, *Rope* and *Strangers on a Train*, the actual story only really starts after murder has taken place. What is shown before is mostly preamble, only shown to establish a mood, a social context (*Rope*) or a point of departure for the story to happen (*Strangers on a Train*).

In Hitchcock's films there are two basic narrative structures, both involving the investigation of a crime: "the main protagonist is the one who carries out the investigation" or "the main protagonist is the one who is under investigation" (Buckland: 65). In *Strangers on a Train*, both structures apply. Guy is under investigation by the police but simultaneously tries to solve his problems by himself, carrying out his own investigation. *Psycho* is another such example: it "begins with a crime (Marion stealing \$40,000), which is then investigated – by Arbogast, Lila and Sam. But as the investigation continues, it soon becomes evident that it is not only Marion's theft that is being investigated, but also the murders committed by Norman" (65).

The disruption of equilibrium in *Rope* happens right at the beginning of the film when David Kentley is murdered and it is only restored in the end of the film, when Rupert finds out what has happened and claims that his theories were never meant to encourage what Brandon and Philip have done. Although the equilibrium is apparently restored, in fact things will never be the same again: David is dead, Brandon and Philip become murderers and are taken into custody and Rupert is horrified and has to face the consequences of his theories. In *Strangers on a Train* it is also murder that disrupts the equilibrium irrevocably. Although murder does not occur at the beginning of the film as in *Rope*, it occurs rather early on, more or less during the first third of the film. Contrary to what occurs in *Rope*, where the story is marked by an extreme unity of time, place and action, here the story is dispersed. There are several settings, several cities and several important events taking place at the same time. Moreover, Hitchcock played with this distance, establishing parallels and echoes between Bruno and Guy's geographically distinct actions and words, thereby reinforcing the idea that they are two sides of the same coin, a personality split in two.

As I mentioned above, what is prior to the murder is shown in order to establish a point of departure for the story. In this case, nothing very abnormal seems to happen in the first scenes of the film. Bruno and Guy's meeting at the train, after a series of alternate shots of their shoes, until Guy accidentally touches Bruno's shoe, leads them into the conversation that is going to change their lives, as well as the lives of the people around them. Concluding that they both have

people who make their lives difficult and disagreeable and whom they would like to be rid of, Bruno presents to Guy his idea to a perfect murder, and assumes that they have an agreement. At the end of the film, when the carousel breaks down, Guy's immediate problems seem to have ended but he has to face the fact that he has helped to cause two deaths, one of which he was partly complicit in willing. Equilibrium is also restored but things have inevitably changed; Guy does not look the same either to himself or his fiancée, which is the point of the doppelgänger plot. A side of yourself is revealed which may not be the dominant one but its presence henceforth cannot be ignored.

In *Psycho*, the moment of the murder seems to establish the line that divides the film in two distinct parts: before and after Marion's death. Joseph Stefano, *Psycho*'s screenwriter, claims to be the one who suggested the division of the film in two different parts, "[w]e'll find out what the girl is all about, see her steal the money and head for Sam [her boyfriend] – on the way, this horrendous thing happens to her" (Kapsis: 57). In fact, the first third of the film seems to be constructing the story of a 'female noir,' a desperate and lonely young woman who steals forty thousand dollars from her boss's office in order to solve some of her personal problems, which were exposed at the beginning of the film. But a sudden and unexpected event changes the whole course of the story. She is suddenly thrust violently from protagonism to victimhood and suddenly there is nothing more to say or feel about her. That female noir, and its game of audience identification, is effectively sunk in the swamp.

The murder occurs shortly after the end of the first third of the film. Moreover, it is the leading star that is murdered. Buckland remarks that

Psycho is notable for not conforming to this three-fold narrative structure because the main character, Marion, is killed a third of the way through the film. (She therefore goes through a radical transformation.) However, her act of stealing the money marks the beginning of the film's liminal period (33),

that is, the middle period, the period of disruption of the equilibrium. Furthermore, "[a]fter Marion is murdered, Norman Bates then becomes the film's dominant character. The film's liminal period comes to an end when he is arrested for the murder of Marion (as well as his mother)" (33). Rebello considers that "Not only was it a technical tour de force (...), but it also sledge-hammered five decades of

movie convention which had it that the star never died (if at all) until the last reel” (quoted by Kapsis: 58). Kael comments that “Hitchcock teased us by killing off the one marquee-name star early in *Psycho*, a gambit which startled us not just because of the suddenness of the murder or how it was committed but because it broke a box-office convention and so it was a joke played on what audiences have learned to expect” (quoted by Kapsis: 108) (a trope repeated in Brian de Palma’s *Dressed To Kill* and which has become something of a thriller cliché subsequently). Hitchcock remarks that *Psycho* “is a film that belongs to film-makers” and that “the construction of the story and the way in which it was told caused audiences all over the world to react and become emotional” (Truffaut: 434). That was what was really important to Hitchcock, not so much the story that was told but how it was told: “you have to design your film just as Shakespeare did his plays – for an audience” (Truffaut: 436), he advised. He also remarked that “*Psycho* has a very interesting construction and that game with the audience was fascinating. I was directing the viewers. You might say I was playing them, like an organ” (Truffaut: 417).

An underlying assumption common to the three films is that things happen, that murder erupts, unexpectedly, out of the blue, and no one can do anything to prevent it. Danger is arbitrary and cannot be avoided. “Well, that’s what life is like. Things happen out of the blue. You may say I’m going downtown to the movies, but on the way you might be killed. One must never set up a murder. They must happen unexpectedly, as in life” (Hitchcock quoted by Bogdanovich: 477). Furthermore, sometimes murder happens at the hands of the most unexpected people (that is, unexpected by the victim, a possible interpretation of George Orwell’s essay’s argument, although the statistics suggest that murder is ‘predictably’ committed by intimates of the victim), as well as in the most unexpected places. There seems to be a crescendo in the level of arbitrary danger in the three films. From *Rope*, where the place and the murderers were well known by the victim, to *Strangers on a Train*, where although the victim does not know the murderer, he knows who she is, and eventually to *Psycho*, where murder happens in an unfamiliar place, at the hands of an unknown person. The murder in *Psycho* is therefore the most arbitrary and unexpected one in this

analysis although *The Birds* carries 'arbitrariness' and 'inexplicability' a stage further and produces a 'natural' outbreak of murderous violence which nobody can successfully explain. All attempts to ascribe responsibility to the film's protagonists seem imposed and unconvincing, and irrational fear and panic is thereby given its head.

1. Philosophising Murder

The three films display rather different deliberations about murder. In *Rope*, Brandon and Philip reveal their obsession with murder as an existential act expressing their autonomy and superiority, taking it to the extreme of actually committing it, and are unable to recognise the irony beneath Rupert's speech. While Rupert proclaims to be in favour of murder as the solution for the evils of society, such as unemployment or poverty, Brandon and Philip take his words literally and execute a murder. During the party in honour of the dead man, Rupert playacts defending his theories based on Nietzsche and the Übermensch, his disciples playact seeking the applause and admiration of their selected audience, and especially of their mentor. In the end Rupert, the only person at the party who supposedly shares the murderers' ideals, or at least the person responsible for the transmission of those theories, is defied by Brandon to imagine how murder could have been executed, which he is able to do almost exactly. The camera seems to be under his control, illustrating each step of his reconstruction of the murder. When finally Rupert opens the chest he is violently confronted with the practical result of his philosophies about murder. *Rope* can be seen as the reverse of *Psycho* where the star is not marginalised early on but Stewart, initially not seeming to have a central role in the murder, increasingly is found to be the mastermind of it, that is, the star is found to be the belated killer after almost an entire film of deception and misleading niceness.

In contrast, Bruno in *Strangers on a Train* not only articulates but also executes his idea for a perfect murder, demanding that Guy does the same. Moreover, at the Morton's party Bruno not only discusses murder, he also demonstrates on Mrs. Cunningham's neck the perfect way of killing somebody,

which is through strangling. The audience sees the murderer role-playing his murder for a society gathering, as well as philosophising about murder and technique. At the end of *Psycho*, a psychiatrist tries to explain Norman's psychological condition. The figure of the psychiatrist is a controversial figure who either misunderstands Norman Bates or offers too pat an explanation for him and is unable to recognise the danger that is still present, as the fading image of a skull over Norman's face acknowledges. Other corpses are found, withdrawn from the swamp, but much remains unexplained and inexplicable and therefore beyond control. Rothman comments that "Part of *Psycho*'s myth is that there is no world outside its own, that we are fated to be born, live our alienated lives, and die in the very world in which Norman Bates also dwells" (quoted by Kapsis: 60).

2. Storytelling through Dialogue

Although he was mainly a visual artist, Hitchcock also made an excellent use of dialogue as a way of storytelling and through which the back stories of many characters are established. By the artful use of (often very arch and witty) dialogue Hitchcock conveyed important background information to the audience in order to flesh out the characters and somehow explain their attitudes. In *Rope*, which was filmed like a theatre play, particular emphasis was put on dialogue and discursive sequences. During Brandon and Philip's dialogue the audience becomes aware of the identity of their victim, as well as of their theories about murder and the man who inspired them and whose approval they seek, their mentor Rupert Cadell. During the party the three of them share their theories with the other guests (sounding-boards perhaps for more normative morality), as well as offering details of revealing back stories about Philip and Brandon. Philip had a job strangling chickens and Brandon had a macabre attraction towards chests. Both stories seem to indicate the existence of a trauma in their lives and both are related to the murder they committed: their strangling of David Kentley and hiding the corpse in a chest in their living room. Rupert's back story as mentor and educator of the two murderers seems to return to accuse him when he finds out about the murder. In *Strangers on a Train*, through Guy and Bruno's dialogue the

audience become aware not only of Bruno's plan for a perfect murder but also of his animosity towards his father. It is also through their dialogue that the audience learns a little more about Guy's back story, his failed marriage and his new relationship, as well as his present political aspirations. In *Psycho*, in the office where Marion works, through Cassidy's words the audience (as well as Marion herself) is informed that he is a very rich man, whose daughter never had an unhappy day in her life, and who never carries more than he can afford to lose. This piece of conversation establishes not only Cassidy and his daughter's background but it also becomes a kind of justifying context for Marion's theft (the world being anything but a fair place for all). Through the crucial dialogue between Marion and Norman in the parlour of the Motel, the audience receives intimations of Norman's abnormal relationship with his mother. Although he feels entrapped, he does not want to free himself. At the end of the film, the audience learns about Norman in a lengthy scene of speechifying, with the psychiatrist explaining, or trying to explain, his psychological condition, which he fails to fully understand: "In this scene, heavy with expository dialogue, the psychiatrist lectures the Fairvale nabobs, Sam, Lila – and the audience – on the skewed psychic psychology of Norman Bates" (Rebello: 127). Hitchcock was forced to put this scene in the film: "Hitchcock and his screenwriter knew that the scene, the bane of creative types, was 'obligatory': a chance for the audience to catch its collective breath while the 'logic' buffs among them got their fill of the facts" (127). According to Marshal Scholm, quoted by Rebello, Hitchcock shot the scene "very clinically." Concerned about censorship, "Mr. Hitchcock directed Mr. Oakland [Simon Oakland] to say the lines the way he felt they should be told. He printed the first or second take. He yelled cut, went over and shook the actor's hand, saying 'Thank you very much, Mr. Oakland. You've just saved my picture'" (128).

The title of the film itself, *Psycho*, announces in advance the motif of the film and creates expectation in the minds of the audience. While *Rope* refers to the murder weapon and *Strangers on a Train* to the departure situation of the story, *Psycho* announces the immersion into an abnormal world. Saul Bass, who created the titles, comments that "I liked giving more zip to *Psycho* because it was not only the name of the picture but a word that *means* something." Furthermore: "I was

trying to make it more frenetic and I liked the idea of images suggesting clues coming together. Put these together and now you know something. Put another set of clues together and you know something else” (Rebello: 140). Hitchcock considered that

When making a suspense picture (...) one must never confuse the audience. Always give them the fullest facts. Occasionally one even provides the audience with information the character doesn't know. That builds suspense as well. But one must always play fair with the audience. Take a look at *Psycho* a second time. It's honest; you can check all the details; all the clues are provided during the picture. All-important, however, is the fact that cinema is a visual medium (Bogdanovich: 477).

In fact, this is somewhat disingenuous, since throughout the film Hitchcock employs all the means he can in order to conceal Mrs. Bates's state or identity, expressly through the use of shadows, misleading shots or high angles. Hitchcock's narrative is a game of clues. Although they are there, they are comically set in a narrative that encourages the audience to feel sympathy for a boy tyrannised by his nasty bad-tempered mother. Hitchcock can do this for several reasons: because he is a master of film technique and control; because Hollywood conventions are so restrictive and formulaic that no plot quite as macabre as this had ever appeared like this (Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter* (1955), for example, seems ordinarily nightmarish in comparison) before in mainstream cinema, and no portrait of a psychopath has ever been permissible in these terms.

3. Editing: Manipulating Time and Suspense

“Pure cinema is complementary pieces of film put together, like notes of music to make a melody” (Conrad: 212). This statement by Hitchcock proclaims editing as the medium to achieve pure cinema. The art of editing divides a dramatic unit into many shots which are then put together in order to obtain the complete scene. Among other advantages editing gives the director the possibility of having almost complete control over the events and actors, since “the scene only comes together when the shots are edited together” (Buckland:16) Alfred Hitchcock, a director who needed to have that kind of complete control, is quoted

by Buckland: "The screen ought to speak its own language, freshly coined, and it can't do that unless it treats an acted scene as a piece of raw material which must be broken up, taken to bits, before it can be woven into an expressive visual pattern." Editing, unlike what happens with the long take, allows that "through the changes in viewpoint implied by the change of shot, the director can fully involve the spectator in the action" (16). Hitchcock was "famous for his skilful deployment of editing" (17), however, he could not resist experimenting with the long take in *Rope*, and also in *Under Capricorn* (1949). "*Rope* takes the long take to its logical conclusion" (64), that is the maximum length of the reel, therefore "abandoning completely his hitherto firmly held precepts on the use of editing to create dramatic effects" (Maxford: 220). Despite the self-imposed limitations of space and cutting between shots, the camera moves at ease and almost continuously around the apartment. These long takes emphasise the actors' performance "which is not cut up into many shots" and maintain "the dramatic unities of space and time" (Buckland: 65). In fact, in *Rope* the events take place in one evening. Wood comments that "The main line of development of the film is less the gradual process whereby the murder is brought to light than that whereby the James Stewart character – Rupert – is brought to realize how deeply he is implicated in it; the two processes in fact coincide, and the quality of the suspense depends partly on this duality of development" (78). Tension is built around the spectator's contradictory feelings towards the murderers. Arthur Laurents, who wrote the script for *Rope*, disagreed with Hitchcock and would have preferred to concentrate the suspense in doubt as to whether there was or was not a body in the chest. However, Hitchcock chose to show the crime right at the beginning of the film, concentrating all the suspense on the question of detection and exposure.

In his next film, *Under Capricorn*, Hitchcock combined editing and long takes, but soon he returned to editing. In his address before the Film Society of Lincoln Center, after concluding with a quotation from Thomas de Quincey's essay, 'Murder as One of the Fine Arts,' Hitchcock said "As you can see, the best way to do it is with scissors," referring not only to the murder weapon in *Dial M for Murder* (1954), but also to "the art of film editing or cutting *per se*, and to the

fragmented image of the human body in the cinematic frame” (Brigitte Peucker, in *Alfred Hitchcock Centenary Essays*: 141).

In *Strangers on a Train* and also in *Psycho*, Hitchcock magnificently applied the complex arts of editing and cutting. The parallel actions in *Strangers on a Train*, the tennis game and Bruno’s journey to the island, are interwoven in order to build up suspense: “Barbara slipping out to hail a cab and coming back; Guy looking at the clock; Bruno’s journey, which was pared down as the cut evolved; and a well-known announcer who was filmed by Hitchcock and Zeigler [William Zeigler, editor] when they realized, at some point in the editing process, that they needed someone to explain the game” (Krohn: 126). Another kind of game is played simultaneously, and Guy also has to win it. Bruno and Guy have a race against time when, in consecutively alternate shots, they both try to win their game and accomplish their objectives: while Bruno travels to the fairground in order to incriminate Guy by placing his monogrammed lighter at the crime scene, Guy has to win a tennis game quickly in order to get to the island in time to prevent his incrimination. The race against time achieves its climax when Bruno drops the lighter down a grate, and spends several minutes trying to reach it, while Guy has some difficulties in winning the tennis game. Krohn comments that “Hitchcock’s montage replaces logic with magical connections.” In fact the characters seem to be symbolically connected but also opposite, “Guy starts winning again when Bruno loses the lighter, and in a complete reversal of the symbolism of the sequence, which makes them opponents in a deadly game, they win their separate ‘matches’ at the same moment, setting the stage for the ‘playoff’ back at the scene of the crime” (126). After they both achieve their first objectives, they have other goals: while Bruno goes to the fairground and has to wait until it gets dark in order not to be recognised, Guy has to escape police vigilance and travel to the fairground before Bruno achieves his objective. After the tension created by the rapid pace of the previous shots, Hitchcock slows down, allowing the audience some time to decompress while Bruno waits for nightfall and Guy travels to the fairground. Time suddenly seems to have stopped. Truffaut, in his conversations with Hitchcock, points out that “One of the most remarkable aspects of the picture is the bold manipulation of time, the way in which it’s contracted and dilated. First,”

he says, “there’s Farley Granger’s frantic haste to win his tennis match, and then Robert Walker’s panic when he accidentally drops Granger’s lighter in a manhole”, he comments, “In both these scenes, time is tightly compressed – like a lemon.” And he further explains that “after Walker gets to the island, you let go, because he can’t proceed with his plan to frame Granger in broad daylight. So when he asks one of the men in the amusement park, ‘At what time does it get dark around here?’, everything is decompressed”, therefore, “Real-life time takes over while he waits for nightfall” in what Truffaut calls a “dramatic play with time” (287). Through the cutting and montage of shots Hitchcock was able to make the sequences flow at a rapid pace, as well as slow them down, delaying them, manipulating time in order to create tension and compression, then decompression and the return to real time. In this way, Hitchcock speeded up time and then deliberately slowed it down, creating a relativistic sense of time.

Hitchcock also displays his knowledge of editing and montage in the carousel sequence, considered by Maxford “a masterpiece of montage, with Bruno and Guy’s punches being inter-cut with shots of the carousel’s horses, their faces and hooves lurching towards the camera”. These shots were also inter-cut with shots of the people observing: “Hitchcock also edits in reaction shots of the screaming observers, among them a concerned mother. ‘My little boy!’ she yells, at which the director cuts to the boy in question, who is beaming with pleasure over the carousel’s extra speed.” Eventually, an old man crawls under the carousel to reach the control stick: “Though much of the carousel sequence was filmed using models and rear projection, this part was actually done for real” (247). When he gets up it is perfectly visible that the image is speeded up in order to give more rapidity to the carousel and to the sequence.

Besides manipulating time through the use of the techniques of editing and montage, Hitchcock deliberately created several moments of suspense and shock, such as when Guy goes to Bruno’s house: “in that scene we first have a *suspense* effect, through the threatening dog, and later on we have a *surprise* effect when the person in the room turns out to be Robert Walker instead of his father” (Truffaut: 286). The image of the dog licking Farley Granger’s hand was slowed down in order to obtain the desired effect. The suspense also comes from the

doubt as to Guy's intentions. Other shots, like "[t]he close-up of the gun in Bruno's hand when Guy is going down the stairs of the Antony home, for example, was shot after a preview, to heighten the suspense" (Krohn: 126) as well as the tension.

The tension and the suspense are held at a rather higher level in *Psycho*. Hitchcock explained that the first part of *Psycho* had the intention "to detract the viewer's attention in order to heighten the murder. We purposely made that beginning on the long side, with the bit about the theft and her escape, in order to get the audience absorbed with the question of whether she would or would not be caught" (Truffaut: 416). During her long escape sequence, Marion is interrogated by a creepy policeman suspicious of her behaviour, and who follows her for a while. After the shock of Marion's murder, Hitchcock creates a moment of suspense in which the audience is once again manipulated, the sinking of Marion's car. Rebello explains that "Hitchcock had calculated the scene as an opportunity to wring every possible moment of suspense by showing the car hitting a snag before sinking. The idea was to make each audience member an active conspirator in the agony – and, by implication, the madness – of Norman" (126). Besides Marion's there is another murder in *Psycho*, another complicated sequence to shoot, as well as another moment of suspense. Arbogast's murder happens in the second part, in an equally violent way, while he is investigating Marion's disappearance. Arbogast starts investigating and, on his second visit he decides to investigate the house. Hitchcock explained to Truffaut that the first filmed shots of Arbogast going up the stairs, based on Saul Bass' drawings, were a revelation for him "because as that sequence was cut, it wasn't an innocent person but a sinister man who was going up those stairs. Those cuts would have been perfectly all right if they were showing a killer, but they were in conflict with the whole spirit of the scene." The audience had been carefully prepared for this scene: "we had established a mystery woman in the house; we had established the fact that this mystery woman had come down and slashed a woman to pieces under her shower." Therefore, "[a]ll the elements that would convey suspense to the detective's journey upstairs had gone before and we therefore needed a simple statement. We needed to show a staircase and a man going up that staircase in a very simple way" (422).

Filmed in a single continuous shot Arbogast goes up the staircase and the camera continues to rise up to a high angle, “in order not to give the impression that I was trying to avoid showing her” to conceal the murderer’s identity, which in fact he was. However the main reason was getting the contrast between the long shot and the close-up of Arbogast’s big head the moment he was attacked with the knife (423). The audience witnesses the moment in which a door opens and Arbogast becomes the second murdered person in the film, also by stabbing and also apparently by the same figure that had murdered Marion and whose identity Hitchcock conceals through shadowy images, high angles and a rather believable story of a mad mother who completely dominates her son. The suspense in this film is created mainly around the doubt concerning the identity of the murderer as well as of whether the ‘detectives’ will themselves coming to serious harm or if other murders will occur.

Rebello acknowledges that Hitchcock had no interest whatsoever in the characters of Sam and Lila, therefore “the conflict between Norman and Arbogast became more crucial. Rehearsing the funny-tense scene where Arbogast interrogates Bates in the motel office, Hitchcock could not have helped but be excited by the electricity between his actors.” Therefore Hitchcock decided to shoot the scene “more naturalistically” than originally planned by encouraging Martin Balsam (a great character actor from *12 Angry Men* and other dramas) and Anthony Perkins (he and Janet Leigh were two matinee idols, unaccustomed to this type of role but delivered here immaculate performances displaying professionalism and dedication) “to find their own rhythms and subtext, to overlap each other’s dialogue” which they did with a remarkable kinetic performance worthy of applause. Rebello quotes the art director Robert Clatworthy: “The first time they did it, Hitchcock just shot the inquisition in that little office straight through, no cuts. I thought it was marvelous” (119). Although it was the first scene that the two actors played together and it was a very long scene, Scholm, the script supervisor, recalls that “Mr. Hitchcock wanted staccato bantering. They did it in one take” (120). Arbogast’s bullying of Norman, as well as his apparent complacency, will meet some retribution in his later encounter with “Mother.”

Besides the two murders that are particularly violent in this film, there are other eruptions of violence, namely the fight between Sam and Norman when he realizes that Lila is inside his house, as well as their fight in the fruit cellar when Norman is about to attack Lila. Both are relatively mundane scuffles compared to the technical intricacy of the killings but Sam's restraint of murderous "Mother" is one of the great shock disrobing/denouement scenes in cinema, heavily marked by the climactic use of Herrman's musical score. "Hitchcock admitted that *Psycho* did break with the conventions of the Hitchcock thriller film by resorting to the depiction of physical violence" (Kapsis: 258), but under closer inspection the shock is more due to the control of narrative events and to astute stylisation than any gory effects *per se*.

The sequence in which "Mother" murders Marion is a masterpiece of cutting and montage which has had a tremendous impact on film form. Hitchcock stated that "It took us seven days to shoot that scene, and there were seventy camera setups for forty-five seconds of footage" (Truffaut: 427). Hilton Green, the assistant director commented that "It was not that difficult because it was laid out. We knew shot for shot and setup for setup where the camera would go ahead of time. It only took time because of the many different angles we had to get" (Rebello: 106). Rebello states that "No member of the Hitchcock team of collaborators could have predicted the impact the sequence was to have in the movie or on movie history. In design and execution, the sequence was a masterstroke." In fact, "Hitchcock simultaneously succeeded in titillating and shocking the viewer while concealing the nudity of the victim and the true identity of the attacker." Furthermore, "the impressionistic montage so stylized and abstracted the action that the sequence was to devastate rather than nauseate the audience" (117). In order to minimize the predictable oppositions of the censors, Hitchcock decided: "I'm going to shoot and cut it staccato, so the audience won't know what the hell is going on." Saul Bass responded with "a montage approach, a barrage of oblique angles, medium shots, and close-ups" (101). Through montage the images acquired a completely new meaning, "[a]lthough the scene would contain very little movement and images that, in themselves, might seem banal or benign, the bits of film cut together were meant to create an impression of savage, almost visceral violence"

(Rebello: 101-102). According to Buckland, "This scene therefore illustrates Eisenstein's argument that the arrangement of shots into a rhythmic pattern is more important than the single shot just as, in music, the arrangement of notes is more important than the single note" (24). Through the montage and the rapidity of the cutting a completely different meaning is created: "The shots (the raw material) do not contain images of Marion being cut or stabbed by the knife. Nonetheless, the rhythm of the cutting creates a meaning that goes beyond the literal content of the images – Marion's murder" (24). Surprised and devastated, the audience's perception is deceived by the quick cutting. Hitchcock told Truffaut that "Naturally, the knife never touched the body; it was all done in the montage. I shot some of it in slow motion so as to cover the breasts. The slow shots were not accelerated later on because they were inserted in the montage so as to give an impression of normal speed" (427-429). Through the slowing down or the speeding up of scenes, Hitchcock managed to leave an impression of violence and murder in the minds of the audience.

Psycho was directed with the rapid pace of his television shows and, according to Rebello, "During completion of the impressive contributions by Bernard Herrmann and Saul Bass, Hitchcock and editor George Tomasini sharpened the pace of the picture with minor trims." In order to avoid too long scenes, as well as to keep up the pace of the film, Hitchcock cut some scenes: "The collaborators cut unnecessary interchanges between Marion and Sam (in the hotel room), between Marion and Cassidy (the oilman who sexually harasses her), and between Sam and Lila" (142). For instance, when Sam and Lila drive to the Motel some of their dialogue was cut; before the psychiatrist's monologue some scenes were also cut, as well as some lines of dialogue between Sam and Lila, also demonstrating Hitchcock's lack of interest in these characters. The screenwriter Joseph Stefano complained of the cuts made by Hitchcock: "He had also made some cuts for time toward the end of the movie that I felt bad about. It was a scene with Sam and Lila, the only point in the movie where you got the sense Sam was aware of the loss of this woman he had loved" (Rebello: 145). Other shots were also edited, such as "shots of Marion hurrying from the hotel after her rendezvous with Sam, and of exteriors as she drives away from her

house with the stolen money” (142). On the other hand, in the scene in which Marion packs, Hitchcock increased the number of cuts: “I always want the audience to think what she’s thinking. The minute I lose one person, I’ve lost the entire audience” (Rebello: 134). In order to avoid this, Hitchcock used a high number of point of view shots that represent a character’s look. Besides the point of view shots in Marion’s car, Hitchcock devised “a point-of-view shot to heighten audience identification with Janet Leigh. He wanted to show water pulsing out the shower head straight toward the camera.” In order to keep the lens dry, Hitchcock suggested the use of a long lens, as well as the blocking off of the inner holes, and so they got the shot (114). Rebello gives an example from the screenplay, describing the moment when Lila is about to enter the Bates house (49,50):

EXT. REAR OF MOTEL – S.C.U. [CLOSE-UP] – DAY

Behind the motel Lila hesitates. She looks ahead.

LONG SHOT – DAY

The old house standing against the sky.

CLOSE-UP

Lila moves forward.

LONG SHOT

The CAMERA approaching the house.

CLOSE-UP

Lila glances toward the back of Norman’s parlor. She moves on.

LONG SHOT

The house coming nearer.

CLOSE-UP

Lila looks up at the house. She moves forward purposefully.

SUBJECTIVE SHOT

The house and the porch.

CLOSE-UP

Lila stops at the house and looks up. She glances back. She turns to the house again.

SUBJECTIVE SHOT

The CAMERA MOUNTS the steps to the porch.

CLOSE-UP

Lila puts out her hand.

SUBJECTIVE CLOSE-UP

Lila's hand pushes the door open. We see the hallway. Lila ENTERS.

PAST CAMERA

According to Rebello, Joseph Stefano explained that "He always thought about making the audience share the point of view of the character" (49), thus provoking the audience's identification. But, as this citation shows, he always maintained the clarity of scenes by the alternate use of objectifying shots.

4. Temporal Integrity in *Psycho*

In the 1960's movie theatres had continuous performance screenings, that is, people could enter the cinema at any time, starting to see the movie from the middle or even the end. Hitchcock decided to preserve *Psycho*'s temporal integrity, therefore no one was allowed into theatres after the film had started. In a recorded message to the audience Hitchcock justified this extraordinary requirement: "*Psycho* is most enjoyable when viewed beginning at the beginning and proceeding to the end. I realize this is a revolutionary concept, but we have discovered that *Psycho* is unlike most motion pictures, and does not improve when run backwards" (Rebello: 151). This strategy was employed mainly due to the fact that his leading lady dies at the end of the first third of the film as I mentioned previously. Hitchcock explained

I purposely killed the star so as to make the killing even more unexpected. As a matter of fact, that's why I insisted that the audiences be kept out of the theaters once the picture had started, because the late-comers would have been waiting to see Janet Leigh after she has disappeared from the screen action (Truffaut: 417)

Hitchcock, in a conversation with Bogdanovich, reinforced that idea by justifying: "You can't have blurred thinking in suspense" (533).

Moreover, the novelty of this measure was a major feature of the film's publicity. "Virtually all newspaper ads, posters, and radio and TV spots featured Hitchcock himself proclaiming that 'No one...*but no one*...will be admitted to the theatre after the start of each performance of ...*Psycho*'" (Kapsis: 58). Therefore, Harris and Lasky acknowledge that "Not only did this help the publicity by giving the movie a special aura, but it created long lines in front of theatres hours before the showing began" (220). The manipulation of audiences began even before the film's exhibition through the creation of expectations. However, Hitchcock still "worried about the commercial prospects of the film, fearing that once the initial audience saw *Psycho*, they would divulge the ending, thereby diminishing interest in the picture". Hence, trying to reduce the possibilities of this occurring, Hitchcock decided not to screen the film in advance for critics. Furthermore, "Lew Wasserman reportedly advised him to open *Psycho* nationally in thousands of theaters after the film's prerelease engagement in two New York City theaters." The idea was that Hitchcock's name would attract people to theatre: "At the very least, Hitchcock's name would lure people into the theater for two weeks or so, long enough for *Psycho* to break even" (Kapsis: 59). By the time it was released no one could predict the success it would become, but eventually the most unpredictable of films (in its story as well as in its success), became one of Hitchcock's crowning masterpieces.

Psycho is the final example of how danger can be completely arbitrary and consequently difficult to avoid altogether (like Hitchcock's downtown cinema trip). The nature of the danger is more irrational and more arbitrary than in any other film to that point and opened the way for the depiction of a postmodern filmic world that was less accessible to formulas, hierarchies, facile explanations and predictable outcomes. It enlarged the field of the possible in the thriller film, and arguably beyond it as well.

Conclusion

Some films are slices of life. Mine are slices of cake.

Alfred Hitchcock quoted by François Truffaut in *Hitchcock by Truffaut, The definitive study*, p. 135

Alfred Hitchcock explained to Truffaut that he did not want “to film ‘a slice of life’ because people can get that at home, in the street, or even in front of the movie theatre. They don’t have to pay money to see a slice of life” (135). It is not the normal, the every day life that fascinated Hitchcock, it was exactly the disruption of that normality, not a wholly improbable disruption but a disruption that could happen to any person: “I avoid out-and-out fantasy because people should be able to identify with the characters.” Throughout Hitchcock’s films there is an underlying necessity to make the audience identify with the characters, to make them feel the film and become part of it, to make the audience be aroused by pure film. Hitchcock, having started in silent films, told stories mainly through images, through visual means: “Making a film means, first of all, to tell a story. That story can be an improbable one, but it should never be banal. It must be dramatic and human. What is drama, after all, but life with the dull bits cut out” (135). Always willing to try new techniques, he was able to get the most out of them and take them further and further, but there was nothing gratuitous in his innovations: “The next factor is the technique of film-making, and in this connection, I am against virtuosity for its own sake. Technique should enrich the action” (135-136). Nothing in Hitchcock’s films was left to chance, if a camera was positioned at a certain angle there was a reason for that, if one image was shown at a certain moment, there was a purpose to it: “One doesn’t set the camera at a certain angle just because the cameraman happens to be enthusiastic about that spot. The only thing that matters is whether the installation of the camera at a given angle is going to give the scene its maximum impact.” Hitchcock summed it all up in one sentence: “The beauty of image and movement, the rhythm and the effects – everything must be subordinated to the purpose” (136). And his purpose was to tell stories and to generate powerful emotions in the audience whenever possible.

Considering Hitchcock's place in film studies, I began with a review of some of the books written on Hitchcock. Through a general introduction to Hitchcock and a brief analysis of the evolution of his career, as well as an overview of Hitchcock's films and some innovative techniques that he used in order to tell his stories visually, it is possible to show that over the years Hitchcock's work and reputation did not have a linear development, it was rather a career with many ups and downs, which is not surprising since he had such a very long career and the pressures and constraints on his films were always very variable. Many of the films he made were assignments and not his choice. After achieving success in Britain, his decision to go to Hollywood exposed him to some criticism but it also gave him the opportunities he needed in order to develop his work both technically and imaginatively. In Hollywood he made some of the most emblematic films of his career and became one of the most influential and acclaimed directors. Nevertheless, or maybe because of that, his career as a director in America was never crowned with Oscar recognition.

Although marked by his Catholic upbringing and education, there is something more modern, more transcending of traditional values, in his art. There is always, for example, an attempt to question the moral standards by which society in general lives, as well as an unsentimental exposition of the moral dilemmas that human beings have to face in their attempt to discriminate clearly between their private desires and society's expectations of them. In the second chapter I analysed the three films in respect of moral issues, in terms of good and bad behaviour, concluding that sometimes it is almost impossible to draw a clear distinction between them, due to the complexity of adult life and the inadequacy of the simple notions of right and wrong that are transmitted to us at an early age and which come into conflict with our suppressed desires and sympathies. Therefore it is not easy to determine a moral course of conduct by which to order our lives. Furthermore, I focused on murder as a sin, as well as on Hitchcock's intimations of the potential for chaos that surrounds us. As an artist considered to be influenced by Catholicism, Hitchcock was fascinated by the forbidden, hell and damnation; therefore most of his films focus on the challenging of socially established laws and rules, as well as on the symbolic representation of order and chaos usually

through the use of light and shadows. However, in the end, in almost every film, the morally wayward characters are punished and the arguably legitimate social order and moral standards are re-established, sometimes through the persistence of residual guilt but mostly through direct punishment. Throughout his films Hitchcock exposes the shallowness of our convictions, beliefs and judgements, that is, he exposes the precariousness of the social order.

These distinctions are also made aesthetically, that is, always with a distinctive style and panache. Aesthetic judgements about violence or even murder, as proclaimed by Thomas De Quincey and George Orwell, transform those acts into something visually appealing, attractive and even beautiful, worthy of approval and applause. Hitchcock achieves this highly stylized version of crime and violence through several means, but mostly through the shooting process itself, that is through close-ups, framings, cuts and cross-cutting, as well as through the set design, properties and costumes that greatly enhance his pictures. Hence, he transforms what otherwise would be hideous and hateful into something visually appealing and worthy of artistic appreciation, in short something to be enjoyed. The murderer in this light becomes a kind of artist and the murder he executes is his work of art, his masterpiece (as Brandon proclaims in *Rope*) that deserves to be exhibited (and appreciated by a few) on the stage of real life. Other elements like music, doubles, shadows and concealment are part of Hitchcock's set of instruments in order to make murder and violence visually appealing and attractive, as well as to provoke extreme emotions and reactions in his audiences, given that strong emotions like fear, as he argues on many occasions, are deeply pleasurable if experienced from a position of safety.

Another major weapon in his artistic arsenal, I would argue, is his astute story-telling technique. Through a game of clues and deceptions, Hitchcock deliberately plays with the spectator, through film editing and artful composition. Therefore Hitchcock, by his careful editing of short and long scenes, varying the editorial pace, and manipulation of events, in order to speed up or slow down the plot, builds moments of suspense and tension and manages to leave his audience in a state of arousal or high excitement. There is not a single shot that does not have a reason to be there, at that precise moment. Time can also be speeded up

or slowed down, creating a subjective sense of time, through the scenes that are shown, as well as through the rapidity of alternation between them. Through storytelling, as well as through dialogue, and action and discursive sequences Hitchcock manages to establish an economic narrative background for the characters and situations in his films thereby engaging the spectator in his developing plots.

Always working with audience response as his primary concern, Hitchcock truly managed to get inside a collective psychology and manipulate it to his own ends. Only someone who completely dominated the techniques and resources of cinema, and knew human reactions and moral dilemmas pretty well, could make the heinous, admirable and the horrible aesthetically appetising. That was one (not the least) of Hitchcock's contributions to cinema: to make us share the perdition of the moral landscape of his films and to question some of our dearly held moral and social standards, as well as perhaps to feel ashamed of some of our aesthetic responses.

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<http://plato.stanford.edu/>

<http://us.imdb.com/>

<http://www.allmovieguide.com/>

<http://www.amazon.co.uk>

<http://www.austinchronicle.com>

<http://www.geocities.com/>

<http://www.leopoldandloeb.com/rope/html>

<http://www.moviemaker.com/issues/08/psycho2.html>

<http://www.mywiseowl.com/>

<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/>

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<http://www.tdfilm.com/>

Filmography:

(For ease of reference purposes for the reader, all the major films in Alfred Hitchcock's career are included).

Rope

(US, 1948, 80 minutes, Technicolor)

Production Company: Transatlantic Pictures, Warner Bros

Studio: Warner Bros

Distributor: Warner Bros

Produced by Sidney Bernstein, Alfred Hitchcock

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

Adapted by Hume Cronyn, with Arthur Laurents and Ben Hecht (uncredited), based on the play *Rope's End* by Patrick Hamilton

Original music by Leo F Forbstein based on the theme 'Perpetual Movement N° 1' by François Poulenc

Radio Sequence: the Three Suns

Sound: Al Riggs

Film Editing: William H Ziegler

Assistant Director: Lowell J Farrell

Production Manager: Fred Ahern

Art Director: Peggy Ferguson

Photography: Joseph A Valentine, William V Skall

Set Decorator: Emile Kuri, Howard Bristol

Colour Coordinator: Robert Brower

Colour Consultant/ Technicolor Director: Natalie Kalmus

Costume Design: Adrian

Make-up Artist: Perc Westmore

Cast:

James Stewart – Rupert Cadell

John Dall – Brandon Shaw

Farley Granger – Philip Morgan

Sir Cedric Hardwicke – Mr Kentley
Constance Collier – Mrs Atwater
Douglas Dick – Kenneth Lawrence
Joan Chandler – Janet Walker
Edith Evanson – Mrs. Wilson, the housekeeper
Dick Hogan – David Kentley

Budget: \$1,500,000 (estimated)

Awards:

1949 – Nominated for the Edgar Allan Poe Awards for Best Motion Picture

Strangers on a Train

(US, 1951, 101/100 minutes, bw)

Production Company: Warner Bros

Studio: Warner Bros

Distributor: Warner Bros

Produced by Alfred Hitchcock

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay by Raymond Chandler and Czenzi Ormonde (and Ben Hecht),
adapted by Whitfield Cook, based on the novel by Patricia Highsmith

Director of Photography: Robert Burks

Art Director: Edward S Haworth

Film Editing: William H Ziegler

Sound: Dolph Thomas

Set Decorator: George James Hopkins

Costumes: Leah Rhodes

Make-up Artist: Gordon Bau

Special Effects: Hans F Koenekamp

Production Associate: Barbara Keon

Musical Director: Ray Heindorf

Original Music: Dmitri Tiomkin

Cast:

Farley Granger – Guy Haines
Ruth Roman – Ann Morton
Robert Walker – Bruno Anthony
Leo G Carrol- Senator Morton
Patricia Hitchcock – Barbara Morton
Laura Elliot – Miriam Haines
Marion Lorne – Mrs Anthony
Jonathan Hale – Mr Anthony
Howard St John – Captain Turley
John Brown – Professor Collins
Norma Varden – Mrs Cunningham
Robert Gist – Hennessy
Ralph Moody – Seedy Man
Dick Vessel – Bill
John Doucette – Hammond
Howard Washington – Waiter
Edward Clark – Mr Hargreaves
Leonard Carey; J Louis Johnson – Butlers
Joel Allen; Roy Engel – Policemen
Murray Alper – Boatman
John Butler – Blind Man
Tommy Farrell; Roland Morris – Miriam's Boyfriends
Sam Flint – Man
Edward Hearn – Sgt Campbell
Harry Hines – Man Under Merry-Go-Round
Louis Lettieri – Boy
Charles Meredith – Judge Dolan
Georges Renavent – Monsieur Darville
Odette Myrtil – Madame Darville
Monya Andre; Minna Phillips – Dowagers
Mary Allan Hokanson – Secretary

Edna Holland – Mrs Joyce
Laura Treadwell – Mrs Anderson

Budget: \$1,200,000 (estimated)

Awards:

1952 – Oscar-nominated for Best Cinematography (Robert Burks)
1952 – Nominated for the Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding
Directorial Achievement in Motion Pictures (Alfred Hitchcock)

Psycho

(US, 1960, 109 minutes, bw)

Production Company: Paramount-Shamley Productions

Studio: Paramount / Revue Studios

Distributor: Paramount

Produced by Alfred Hitchcock

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay by Joseph Stefano, based on the novel *Psycho* by Robert Bloch

Music: Bernard Herrmann

Director of Photography: John L Russell

Art Directors: Joseph Hurley and Robert Clatworthy

Set Decorator: George Milo

Unit Manager: Lew Leary

Edited by George Tomasini

Costumes: Helen Colvig (Supervisor), Rita Riggs, Edith Head

Make-up: Jack Barron and Robert Dawn

Hair Stylist: Florence Bush

Special Effects: Clarence Champagne

Sound Recording: Waldon O Watson and William Russel

Assistant Director: Hilton A Green

Title Designer / Pictorial Consultant: Saul Bass

Cast:

Anthony Perkins – Norman Bates

Janet Leigh – Marion Crane

Vera Miles – Lila Crane

John Gavin – Sam Loomis

Martin Balsam – Milton Arbogast

John McIntire – Sheriff Chambers

Simon Oakland – Dr Richmond

Vaughn Taylor – George Lowery

Frank Albertson – Tom Cassidy

Lurene Tuttle – Mrs Chambers

Patricia Hitchcock (credited as Pat Hitchcock) – Caroline

John Anderson – California Charlie

Mort Mills – Highway Patrolman

Francis De Sales; Sam Flint – Officials

George Eldredge – Chief of Police

Frank Killmond – Bob Summerfield

Ted Knight – Prison Guard

Ann Dore; Margo Epper; Mitzi – “Mother”

Jeanette Nolan; Paul Jasmin; Virginia Gregg – Voice of “Mother”

Budget: \$806,947 (estimated)

Box-office: more than \$15 million in its first year

Awards:

1961 – Winner of Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actress (Janet Leigh)

1961 – Winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Motion Picture (Joseph Stefano, screenwriter, and Robert Bloch, author)

1961 – Oscar-nominated for Best Art Direction/Set Decoration (Joseph Hurley, Robert Clatworthy and George Milo), Best Cinematography (John L Russell), Best Director (Alfred Hitchcock) and Best Supporting Actress (Janet Leigh)

1961 – Nominated for the Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Motion Pictures (Alfred Hitchcock)

1961 – Nominated for the Writers Guild of America Award for Best Written American Drama (Joseph Stefano)

1961 – Nominated for the Golden Laurel Award for Top Female Supporting Performance (Janet Leigh) – Second place – and for the Golden Laurel Award for Top Drama – Third place

1992 – Selected for preservation by the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress

1998 – Listed as one of the American Film Institute's top 100 films of the century (number 18)

Other Films Directed by Alfred Hitchcock:

The Pleasure Garden (1925)

Producer: Michael Balcon, Eric Pommer

Production Company: Gainsborough - Emelka G.B.A.

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Eliot Stannard, from the novel by Oliver Sandys

Distributors: Wardour & F., 1925; USA, Aymon Independent, 1926

The Mountain Eagle (1926)

Producer: Michael Balcon

Production Company: Gainsborough - Emelka

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Eliot Stannard

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1926; USA, Artlee Indep. Dist., 1926

The Lodger (1926)

Producer: Michael Balcon

Production Company: Gainsborough

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Eliot Stannard, based on a novel by Marie Adelaide Belloc-Lowndes

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1926

Downhill (1927)

Producer: Michael Balcon

Production Company: Gainsborough

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Eliot Stannard, based on a play by Ivor Novello and Constance Collier
(under the pseudonym David LeStrange)

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1928; USA, World Wide Dist., 1928.

Easy Virtue (1927)

Producer: Michael Balcon

Production Company: Gainsborough Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Eliot Stannard, based on a play by Noel Coward

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1927; USA, World Wide Dist., 1928.

The Ring (1927)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alfred Hitchcock

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1927; France, Pathé Consortium Cinéma, 1928.

The Farmer's Wife (1928)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alfred Hitchcock, Eliot Stannard, based on a play by Eden Philpots

Distributor: Wardour & F.; France, Pathé Consortium Cinéma, 1928.

Champagne (1928)

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Eliot Stannard, Alfred Hitchcock, based on an original story by Walter C. Mycroft

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1928.

Harmony Heaven (1929)

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Arthur Wimperis, Randall Faye

Distributor: France-Société des Ciné-romans, 1929.

The Manxman (1929)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Eliot Stannard, from a novel by Sir Hall Caine

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1929; USA, Ufa Eastman Division, 1929.

Blackmail (1929)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Benn W. Levy, Alfred Hitchcock, based on a play by Charles Bennett

Distributors: Wardour & F., 1929; USA, Sono Art World Wide Pict., 1930.

Elstree Calling (1930)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock, André Charlot, Jack Hulbert, Paul Murray

Screenplay: Val Valentine

Juno and the Paycock (1930)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alfred Hitchcock, Alma Reville, based on the play by Sean O'Casey

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1930; USA, British International by Capt. Harold Auten, 1930.

Murder (1930)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alma Reville, Alfred Hitchcock, Walter Mycroft, based on the play and novel *Enter Sir John*, by Clemence Dane and Helen Simpson

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1930.

The Skin Game (1931)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alma Reville, Alfred Hitchcock, based on the play by John Galsworthy

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1931; USA, British International, 1931.

Rich and Strange (1932)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alma Reville, Alfred Hitchcock, Val Valentine, based on a novel by Dale Collins

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1932; USA, Powers Pictures, 1932.

Number Seventeen (1932)

Producer: John Maxwell

Production Company: British International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alma Reville, Alfred Hitchcock, Rodney Ackland, based on the play by J. Jefferson Farjeon

Distributor: Wardour & F., 1932.

Waltzes from Vienna (1933)

Producer: Tom Arnold

Production Company: Gaumont British Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alma Reville, Guy Bolton, based on the play *Waltzes from Vienna* by Guy Bolton, itself based on the German play *Waltzkrieg* by Heinz Reichhart, A.M. Wilmer, Ernest Marischka

Distributor: GDF, 1933; USA, Tom Arnold, 1935.

The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934)

Producer: Michael Balcon; Associate: Ivor Montagu

Production Company: Gaumont British Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: John Michael Hayes, from an original theme by Charles Bennett and D.B. Wyndham Lewis

Distributor: G.F.D., 1935; France, GECE, 1935.

The 39 Steps (1935)

Producers: Michael Balcon, Ivor Montagu

Production Company: Gaumont British

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alma Reville, Charles Bennett, Ian Hay, from the novel by John Buchan

Distributor: G.F.D., 1935; France, GECE, 1935.

The Secret Agent (1936)

Producers: Michael Balcon, Ivor Montagu

Production Company: Gaumont British

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Charles Bennett, Ian Hay, Jesse Lasky Jr., from the novel *Ashenden* by W. Somerset Maugham

Distributor: G.F.D., 1936; USA, GB Prod., 1936

Sabotage (1936)

Producers: Michael Balcon, Ivor Montagu

Production Company: Gaumont British

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alma Reville, Charles Bennett, Ian Hay, Helen Simpson, from the novel *The Secret Agent*, by Joseph Conrad

Distributor: G.F.D., 1936; USA, GB Prod., 1937.

Young and Innocent (1937)

Producer: Edward Black

Production Company: Gainsborough / Gaumont British

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Charles Bennett, Edwin Greenwood, Anthony Armstrong, Gerald Savory, based on the novel *A Shilling for Candles*, by Josephine Tey

Distributor: G.F.D., 1937; USA, GB Prod., 1938.

The Lady Vanishes (1938)

Producer: Edward Black

Production Company: Gainsborough

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder, based on the novel *The Wheel Spins* by Ethel Lina White

Distributors: GB; USA, GB Productions, 1938.

Jamaica Inn (1939)

Producer: Erich Pommer, Charles Laughton

Production Company: Mayflower Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Sidney Gilliat, Joan Harrison, J.B. Priestley, from the novel by Daphne du Maurier

Distributors: Associated British, 1939; Paramount, 1939.

Rebecca (1940)

Producer: David O. Selznick

Production Company: Selznick International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Robert E. Sherwood, Joan Harrison, Philip MacDonald, Michael Hogan, based on the novel by Daphne du Maurier

Distributor: United Artists, 1940.

Foreign Correspondent (1940)

Producer: Walter Wanger

Production Company: Walter Wanger - United Artists

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Charles Bennett, Joan Harrison, James Hilton, Robert Benchley

Distributor: United Artists, 1940.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith (1941)

Executive Producer: Harry E. Edington

Production Company: RKO

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Norman Krasna

Distributor: RKO, 1941.

Suspicion (1941)

Producer: Harry E. Edington

Production Company: RKO

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Samson Raphaelson, Joan Harrison, Alma Reville, from the novel *Before The Fact*, by Francis Iles (the pseudonym of Anthony Berkeley)

Distributor: RKO, 1941.

***Saboteur* (1942)**

Producer: Frank Lloyd

Production Company: Universal Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Peter Viertel, Joan Harrison, Dorothy Parker, from an original idea by Alfred Hitchcock

Distributor: Universal, 1942.

***Shadow of a Doubt* (1943)**

Producer: Jack H. Skirball

Production Company: Universal-Skirball Productions

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Thornton Wilder, Alma Reville, Sally Benson, based on an original story by Gordon McDonnell

Distributor: Universal, 1943.

***Lifeboat* (1943)**

Producer: Kenneth MacGowan

Production Company: 20th Century Fox

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Jo Swerling, from a story by John Steinbeck

Distributor: 20th Century Fox, 1943.

***Bon Voyage* (1944)**

Producer: British Ministry of Information

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: J.O.C. Orton, Angus MacPhail, from an original subject by Arthur Calder-Marshall

Aventure Malgache (1944)

Producer: British Ministry of Information

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Spellbound (1945)

Producer: David O. Selznick

Production Company: Selznick International

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Ben Hecht, Angus MacPhail, suggested by The House Of Dr. Edwardes by Francis Beeding (the pseudonym of Hilary St George Saunders and John Palmer)

Distributor: United Artists, 1945.

Notorious (1946)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: RKO

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Ben Hecht

Distributor: RKO Radio, 1946.

The Paradine Case (1947)

Producer: David O. Selznick

Production Company: Selznick International Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: David O. Selznick, Alma Reville, from the novel by Robert Hichens

Distributor: United Artists, 1947.

Under Capricorn (1949)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock, Sidney Bernstein

Production Company: Transatlantic Pictures

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: James Bridie, Hume Cronyn, based on the novel by Helen Simpson

Distributor: Warner Bros, 1949.

Stage Fright (1950)

Producers: Alfred Hitchcock, Fred Aherne

Production Company: Warner Bros-First National

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Whitfield Cook, Alma Reville, based on a novel by Selwyn Jepson,
Man Running (aka Outrun The Constable)

Distributor: Warner Bros., 1950.

I Confess (1952)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Warner Bros-First National

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: George Tabori, William Archibald, from the play *Nos Deux Consciences* by Paul Anthelme

Distributor: Warner Bros., 1953.

Dial M for Murder (1954)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Warner Bros-First National

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Frederick Knott, from his play

Distributor: Warner Bros., 1954.

Rear Window (1954)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Paramount-Patron Inc.

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: John Michael Hayes, based on the short story by Cornell Woolrich
Distributor: Paramount, 1954.

To Catch a Thief (1955)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock
Production Company: Paramount
Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Screenplay: John Michael Hayes, based on a novel by David Dodge
Distributor: Paramount, 1955.

The Trouble with Harry (1956)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock
Production Company: Paramount - Alfred Hitchcock Productions
Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Screenplay: John Michael Hayes, based on a novel by John Trevor Story
Distributor: Paramount, 1956.

The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock
Production Company: Paramount – Filwite Productions
Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Screenplay: John Michael Hayes, Angus MacPhail, from a story by Charles Bennett and D.B. Wyndham Lewis
Distributor: Paramount, 1956.

The Wrong Man (1957)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock
Production Company: Warner Bros.
Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Screenplay: Maxwell Anderson, Angus MacPhail, based on 'The True Story of Christopher Emmanuel Balestrero' by Maxwell Anderson
Distributor: Warner Bros., 1957.

Vertigo (1958)

Producers: Alfred Hitchcock, Herbert Coleman

Production Company: Paramount-Alfred Hitchcock Productions

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alec Coppel, Samuel Taylor, based on the novel *D'Entre Les Morts* by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac

Distributor: Paramount, 1958.

North by Northwest (1959)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Ernest Lehman

Distributor: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1959.

The Birds (1963)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Universal-Alfred Hitchcock Productions

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Evan Hunter, from the short story by Daphne du Maurier

Distributor: Universal, 1963.

Marnie (1964)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Universal – Geoffrey Stanley, Inc.

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Jay Presson Allen, from the novel by Winston Graham

Distributor: Universal, 1964.

Torn Curtain (1966)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Universal

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Brian Moore

Distributor: Universal

Topaz (1969)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Universal

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Samuel Taylor, based on the novel by Leon Uris

Distributor: Universal, 1969.

Frenzy (1972)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Universal

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Anthony Shaffer, based on the novel *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square* by Arthur La Bern

Distributor: Universal, 1972.

Family Plot (1976)

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Company: Universal

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Ernest Lehman, based on the novel *The Rainbird Pattern* by Victor Canning

Distributor: Universal, 1976.

Other Mentioned Films:

Woman to Woman (1922)

Director: Graham Cutts

Producer: Michael Balcon

Production Company: Michael Balcon, Victor Saville, John Freedman
Screenplay: Graham Cutts and Alfred Hitchcock, from the play by Michael Morton
Distributors: Wardour & F., 1923; France, Gaumont, 1924; USA, Selznick, 1924.

The White Shadow (1923)

Director: Graham Cutts
Producer: Michael Balcon
Production Company: Michael Balcon, Victor Saville, John Freedman
Screenplay: Alfred Hitchcock and Michael Morton
Distributors: Wardour & F., 1923; USA, Selznick, 1924.

The Passionate Adventure (1924)

Director: Graham Cutts
Producer: Michael Balcon
Production Company: Gainsborough
Screenplay: Alfred Hitchcock and Michael Morton
Distributors: Gaumont, 1923; France, Excella Films (by agreement with A.C. and R.C. Bromhead) 1928; USA, Selznick, 1924.

The Blackguard (1925)

Director: Graham Cutts
Producer: Michael Balcon
Production Company: Gainsborough
Screenplay: Alfred Hitchcock, from a novel by Raymond Paton
Distributor: Wardour & F., 1925.

The Prude's Fall (1925)

Director: Graham Cutts
Producer: Michael Balcon
Production Company: Michael Balcon, Victor Saville, John Freedman
Screenplay: Alfred Hitchcock
Distributor: Wardour & F.

The Third Man (1948)

Director: Carol Reed

Producer: Carol Reed

Production Companies: London Film Production; British Lion Film Corporation

Writing credits: Graham Greene (story and screenplay)

The Night of the Hunter (1955)

Director: Charles Laughton

Producer: Paul Gregory

Production Companies: Paul Gregory Productions; United Artists

Writing credits: Davis Grubb (novel) and James Agee (screenplay)

12 Angry Men (1957)

Director: Sidney Lumet

Producer: Henry Fonda and Reginald Rose

Production Company: Orion-Nova Productions

Writing credits: Reginald Rose (story and screenplay)

Compulsion (1959)

Director: Richard Fleischer

Producer: Richard D. Zanuck

Production Company: 20th Century Fox / Darryl F. Zanuck Productions

Screenwriter: Richard Murphy

Swoon (1992)

Director: Tom Kalin

Producer: Denny Vachlioti, Christine Vachon

Screenwriter: Tom Kalin

Documentaries:

"The Hitchcocks on Hitch," *Strangers on a Train* DVD, Warner Bros Entertainment, 2003.

"*Strangers on a Train*: A Hitchcock Classic," *Strangers on a Train* DVD, Warner Bros Entertainment, 2003.

"*Strangers on a Train*: The Victim's POV," *Strangers on a Train* DVD, Warner Bros Entertainment, 2003.

"*Strangers on a Train*: An Appreciation by Night M. Shamalayan," *Strangers on a Train* DVD, Warner Bros Entertainment, 2003.

"Alfred Hitchcock's Historical Meeting," *Strangers on a Train* DVD, Warner Bros Entertainment, 2003.